

Stand Up to Cancer (SU2C)¹ day reminds us of the power of collective action against one of the most challenging diseases of our time. This year, it feels personal, as some of my loved ones are fighting cancer. Their journeys show that no two experiences are the same, underlining why awareness and support matters just as much as the treatment.

Cancer is not only one of the leading causes of death worldwide, but also one of the most disruptive forces in the lives it touches. Watching loved ones go through treatment with both strength and struggle, has reminded me that our efforts cannot stop at early diagnosis - supporting the whole person is essential.

Cancer and mental health

Research shows how deeply mental health is tied to the cancer experience. A recent cross-sectional study reported around 23% of patients experience depression and 30% suffer anxiety, with women diagnosed with female-specific cancers particularly vulnerable. Risk factors included being single, having metastatic disease, or living with cancer for longer, underscoring how social and clinical factors shape outcomes.²



Unmet needs in those affected by cancer

At the same time, between 35% and 80% of people with cancer experience significant psychological distress, yet many never receive support. Untreated anxiety and depression can worsen treatment adherence, increase healthcare costs, and even affect survival. This gap highlights the need for routine distress screening and accessible psychosocial care, ensuring emotional well-being is valued alongside medical progress.³

Impact

The research reflects lived reality: each cancer journey is unique, but many patients face hidden emotional burdens that shape every stage of treatment and recovery. For some, resilience and support networks provide strength; for others, distress and isolation take a heavy toll. These struggles rarely remain with the patient alone - families and caregivers often carry the weight of worry, sleepless nights, and fear.

Author's comments

Stand Up to Cancer Day reminds me that progress is not only about new treatments or survival rates, but also about recognising the emotional toll cancer takes on patients and their families. Journeys differ - some marked by resilience, others by distress, with all deserving compassion. Personally, standing up to cancer means supporting mental health, and the dignity of every person affected.

References

1. Stand Up to Cancer UK website: <https://www.standuptocancer.org.uk/>
2. Shalata W, et al. Mental Health Challenges in Cancer Patients: A Cross-Sectional Analysis of Depression and Anxiety. *Cancers (Basel)*. 2024 Aug 12;16(16):2827. doi: 10.3390/cancers16162827. PMID: 39199598; PMCID: PMC11352929.
3. Bergerot C, et al. Global unmet psychosocial needs in cancer care: health policy. *EClinicalMedicine*. 2024 Nov 16;78:102942. doi: 10.1016/j.eclinm.2024.102942. PMID: 39634034; PMCID: PMC11615525.