

# Resilience in advanced cancer caregiving

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British Journal of General Practice 2020; 70 (suppl  
1): bjgp20X711041. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3399/bjgp20X711041>

## Abstract

**Background** Family caregivers of advanced cancer patients are at risk for developing mental disorders. Despite this risk, the majority seem to adapt well, and throughout the caregiving period, their trajectory is characterised by healthy functioning. However, GPs struggle with making timely assessments of caregivers at risk for mental dysfunction, since they often fail to seek medical help for themselves and the appropriate research about resilience in cancer caregivers is scarce. Moreover, research is hampered by the lack of a universal definition or theoretical framework.

**Aim** To propose a comprehensive definition and framework for further research in family caregiving for advanced cancer patients.

**Method** Inspired by the hermeneutic methodology, reviews and concept analyses on resilience following a potentially traumatic event were searched and analysed. Conforming to the hermeneutic methodology, article collection from PubMed, EMBASE, CINAHL, and PsycInfo was followed by analysis and was stopped when saturation was reached. Elements consistently arising from the definitions of resilience were listed and the theoretical frameworks were compared.

**Results** The APA definition: '*resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma or threats*' and Bonanno's framework '*temporal elements of resilience*' are proposed.

**Conclusion** There is a need for studies on resilience in caregivers of advanced cancer patients. Resilience is context-dependent, hence, study results cannot be transferred as such from one clinical situation to another. Furthermore, conceptual ambiguities hinder the interpretation and comparison of study results. For further research on resilience in caregivers of advanced cancer patients, we suggest the APA definition of resilience and Bonanno's framework.

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