

Interview topic guide

Aim: To assess the perceived effectiveness of psychological interventions in reducing distress, improving coping, and quality of life.

Interviews should last approximately 60 minutes (with up to 90 minutes allowed)

Introduction (5 minutes)

Welcome and Introduction:

- Thank the participant for their time and participation.
- Briefly introduce yourself and the purpose of the study.
- Explain the interview process and estimated duration (approximately 60 minutes).
- Remind the participant about confidentiality and their right to withdraw or skip any questions.
- Offer to answer any questions they may have before starting.
- Confirm that the participant has read the information sheet and signed the consent form, and that they are willing to proceed with the interview.

Warm-Up Questions (5-10 minutes)

Contextual Information (using demographic information form as support):

- General Well-being: How are you feeling today, both physically and emotionally?
- Can you tell me a little about your current situation regarding palliative care?
 - E.g., How long have you (or the person you care for) been receiving palliative care?

Main Topics

1. Experience with Psychological Support (15-20 minutes)

Introduction to Support:

- What form of professional psychological support during palliative care? (e.g., one-to-one therapy, group sessions, mindfulness, etc.)
 - Professional psychological support will be defined as “support provided by mental health practitioners such as therapists, psychologists and counsellors for mental health or emotional wellbeing”.

- How did you first come into contact with psychological support services in the hospice or elsewhere?
- What was the professional background of the person offering psychological/emotional support?

Experience of Receiving Support:

- Can you describe what the psychological support was like for you?
 - Exploring how they felt about the format, content, and approach by the facilitator.
- What aspects of the psychological support did you find most helpful or valuable? Why?
- Were there any aspects that you found less helpful or even unhelpful?
- Do you feel the psychological support had addressed your specific needs as a patient/carer at the time?

Emotional Impact:

- How did the psychological support affect your emotional well-being? (e.g., managing distress, coping with the situation, finding meaning, etc.)
- Did the support you received help you deal with any specific challenges (e.g., feelings of anxiety, fear, grief)?
- How has psychological support helped you manage the emotional and physical challenges you have encountered? (e.g., avoiding burnout, coping strategies)
- Do you feel that it helped to improve your quality of life at the time?
 - Defined as “the degree to which an individual is healthy, comfortable, and able to participate in or enjoy life events”.

2. Barriers and Facilitators to Accessing Psychological Support (10-15 minutes)

Access to Support:

- How easy or difficult was it for you to access psychological support?
- What made it easier for you to access psychological support? (e.g., recommendations from hospice staff, accessibility of services, remote/online support)
- Were there any barriers in accessing support when you needed it? (e.g., practical issues, emotional hesitations, availability of services)

Suggestions for Improvement:

- In your opinion, what could be improved to make psychological support more effective to patients and carers in palliative care?
- In your opinion, what could be improved to make psychological support more accessible to patients and carers in palliative care?
 - What would you like to see in future services?

3. Closing Questions (5-10 minutes)

General Reflections:

- Looking back on your experience with psychological support, is there anything you would change or do differently?
- Are there any additional types of support that you feel could have been helpful but wasn't available e.g., group therapy?

Final Thoughts:

- Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience that we haven't covered today?

Conclusion (5 minutes)

- Thank the participant for their time and contributions to the study.
- Grounding Exercise (if the participant would like to take part in one):
 - Guide the participant through a short grounding exercise to help them transition from the interview.

Debrief Information:

Remind them that they will receive a debrief sheet with contact details for relevant support services if they need additional emotional support.

Next Steps:

Inform the participant about the next steps in the research process and remind them of their right to request a summary of the findings.

Notes for Interviewer:

- Ensure that the interview is conversational and that the participant feels comfortable sharing their experiences.
- Use follow-up questions such as "Can you tell me more about that?" or "How did that make you feel?" to encourage deeper reflections.
- Be sensitive to the emotional nature of the topic and allow the participant time to pause or take breaks as needed.
- Throughout the interview, when appropriate, remind the participant about confidentiality and their right to withdraw or skip any questions.