

# Determinants of the need for psycho-oncological treatment using the Hornheider Screening Instrument in thyroid cancer patients

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## Abstract

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**Introduction:** Cancer is a psychological challenge for many affected patients. The aim of this retrospective study is to determine the psycho-oncological care needs (POCN) of thyroid cancer patients and factors influencing the results of the Hornheider Screening Instrument (HSI) in order to identify particularly vulnerable patient groups.

**Methods:** A total of 230 HSI questionnaires were evaluated and the results correlated with patient-specific characteristics and those of the tumor disease (e.g. age, gender, TNM stage). Both the questionnaire index and the interview index (HSI-II) of the HSI were determined. These data were statistically analyzed to investigate the relationship between individual patient and tumor characteristics and the POCN of cancer patients.

**Results:** The study showed that 35.9% of women and 28.1% of men had a POCN. Female patients had a significantly higher index compared to men in HSI-I and HSI-II ( $p=0.04$  and  $P=0.03$ , respectively), but did not have a significantly higher POCN. Patients with POCN had smaller primary thyroid tumors than patients without POCN ( $P=0.03$ ; 13.5 mm vs. 20.2 mm). No significant correlation between tumor differentiation and POCN or between age and POCN was found.

**Conclusions:** POCN is underestimated in patients with thyroid carcinoma in daily clinical practice. In particular, patients in the low-risk group of thyroid cancer had a higher POCN. Systematic screening of all patients with this rare disease is necessary to identify the relevant proportion of patients with POCN. Easy access to psycho-oncological care for these patients should be expanded in the outpatient care infrastructure.