



# ‘Violence’ and ‘journey’ metaphors revisited

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# Structure of this presentation



- 'Violence' metaphors in end-of-life care:
  - 'Battle/fight/war' metaphors in English generally
  - Violence metaphors and (terminal) illness
  - Findings from our study
- 'Journey' metaphors in end-of-life care :
  - Findings from our study
- Conclusions:
  - Empowerment and disempowerment
  - Wider implications

# Metaphorical uses of 'battle', 'fight' and 'war' in English

- Military/War/Battle metaphors are conventional in relation to difficult enterprises generally, and (terminal) illness in particular:
  - 'Battle against': hunger, autism, cancer, etc.
  - 'Fight against': corruption, homophobia, cancer, etc.
  - 'War on': terrorism, drugs, cancer, etc.
- We prefer the broader term 'Violence' metaphors.

# 'cancer' and 'battle' in the Oxford English Corpus (2.4 billion words)



thanked fans for supporting her through her breast **cancer battle** and saving women 's lives by raising awareness  
ffman in the 1967 film , lost her **battle** with uterine **cancer** on Monday ( 06 06 05 ) with movie director husband  
too good . </p><p> Amazingly , Sharon 's **battle** with **cancer** was witnessed by millions of people around the world  
te to her late mother JANELLE 's **battle** with breast **cancer** , supports a host of women 's health charities in add  
SCAPE star 's death following his **battle** against lung **cancer** . </p><p> And Elkins would love to see his late friend  
nne Bancroft has passed on after a long **battle** with **cancer** . Bancroft was the wife of comedy legend Mel Brook  
s looking visibly better since her **battle** with breast **cancer** and was sporting a cute Mia Farrow-circa- " Rosemary  
ationship with Armstrong and her **battle** with breast **cancer** , Crow told " Good Morning America 's " Diane Sawyer  
oods passed away on May 3 after a long **battle** with **cancer** . The ad was a montage of videos and photographs fr  
s beautiful wife , Shawn . </p><p> Tonight , facing a **cancer battle** and a broken marriage , Mayor Rudy Guilliani  
e died yesterday in L.A. after a brave **battle** against **cancer** . He was 58 . </p><p> Some called him the quiet Be  
, like everyone else . He had a long **battle** with his **cancer** , but I saw him a few weeks ago . And he was full of  
en Reagan died August 8 after a long **battle** against **cancer** . She was the president 's daughter and a political fi  
s the scoop on her nontraditional **battle** with breast **cancer** , it raised a lot of questions . And we are looking for  
and last month after a courageous **battle** with colon **cancer** . Words , of course , will never describe how devast  
nd , last month after a courageous **battle** with Colon **Cancer** . Words , of course , will never describe how devast  
ver Beverly Hills home after a long **battle** with lung **cancer** . She was 74 . </p><p> Rosie had one of the best voi  
s Rat Pack , and fought a long , brave **battle** against **cancer** . Sammy Davis Jr. 's widow , Altovise , shares intimat  
995 . And Jordan 's King Hussein lost his **battle** with **cancer** in February of '99 . </p><p> But today we take you b  
died last night after a brave eight-week **battle** with **cancer** . He died at his home surrounded by his family . And

# 'cancer' and 'fight' in the Oxford English Corpus



( phytochemicals ) have shown promise in the **fight** against **cancer** , albeit in limited trials in the laboratory and in animal  
amazed , but I wasn't . I think the diet helped me **fight** the **cancer** and it was the one thing I could do something about in  
it 's active ingredients . How does each one **fight** or prevent **cancer** - and are any of the alleged benefits scientifically plac  
ventional medical treatment . ' </p><p> In the **fight** against **cancer** , then , the message is clear : legitimate science is lea  
ause . Avon has been committed to the **fight** against breast **cancer** since 1993 , and through 1999 we 've raised \$ 55 million  
ans . As he advocates increases in medical research to **fight cancer** , he should also mention the fight against HIV / AIDS .  
inhibitors , Morris got worse , unable to **fight** off bladder **cancer** that had spread to his lungs . As the two worked fever  
<p> Show your true love how much you care and **fight** breast **cancer** with Kate Spade 's Ford Scarf . The '60s-inspired print i  
or student and academic affairs . </p><p> But my **fight** with **cancer** had changed my life : I wanted to help other cancer p  
lays of the AIDS pandemic . </p><p> Her own long **fight** with **cancer** gave her pitiless insights into illness and into the psych  
cover . Later that year , Etheridge 's **fight** against breast **cancer** inspires an Advocate cover story of another kind . </p>  
ndergone six weeks of intensive radiotherapy to **fight** throat **cancer** . He has now been given the all-clear . A source added  
ebs were on hand to raise money for the **fight** against colon **cancer** . The event , dubbed Hollywood Meets Motown , was f  
ple 's mayor Rudy Giuliani has an update on his **fight** against **cancer** and some observations about the Clinton-Lazio Senate  
biggest individual fund-raising day in the **fight** against breast **cancer** in this country . </p><p> Ann Curry , the news anchor  
ational Denim Day 2000 , fund raising for **fight** against breast **cancer** . October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month . </p><p>  
medical decision , no Democratic or Republican way to **fight cancer** or ease the pain of HIV and AIDS . This is not the time  
Sad to say his daughter , Maureen lost her brave **fight** with **cancer** in August . Sarah Brady , wife of former Reagan Press S  
it can take so you quickly . I - I feel like I can **fight** this **cancer** , and I also feel like it 's not worth my worrying about  
ed about a personal subject tonight , her **fight** against lung **cancer** . We hope you found tonight informative , and hopeful

# 'cancer' and 'war' in the Oxford English Corpus



on , including the middle class , **war** , marriage , **cancer** , and corporations . **</p><p>** Like Alexis de Tocqueville stark fact is that we are not winning the **war** against **cancer** . Many cancers are still escalating at epidemic proportions that we are not winning the **war** against cancer . Many **cancers** are still escalating at epidemic proportions . In public into believing we are winning the **war** against **cancer** , when nothing could be further from the truth . health consequences . In our **war** against cervical **cancer** we need to send out clear and unmistakable messages **</p><p>** There has been a vast growth in the number of **cancer** cases since the Gulf **War** - one hospital shown reported a former soldier in Richard Nixon 's famous **War** on **Cancer** , Duesberg - Ellison maintains - is blind to the lose a lot of taxpayers ' money ' cause their **War** on **Cancer** was going nowhere - the Sainted Doctor Gallo , while Doctor Gallo , while he was engaged in the **War** on **Cancer** , discovered a retrovirus which caused leukaemia area . In the 1970s , President Nixon 's " **War** on **Cancer** " had seen sensationalist reporting of the latest - taxpayers ' money had been wasted on the **War** on **Cancer** , so the triumph of AIDS research was advanced in they dropped in the last Gulf **War** has caused a lot of **cancer** deaths in Iraq . Cancer has gone up four percent it was two to four years after the 1991 **war** before **cancer** and birth defect rates began to rise dramatically depleted uranium used in the last Gulf **War** has increased **cancer** rates exponentially . It was the US army which patented , a cancer is gnawing at his presidency , and that **cancer** is the **war** in Iraq . The American people are now to protest against Russia 's **war** in Chechnya , the **cancer** on our country 's soul , why should they protest to protest against Russia 's **war** in Chechnya , the **cancer** on our country 's soul , why should they protest alone , the airwaves have been full of the " **war** on **cancer** " , the " war on crime " , the " war on drugs " . The trillions of dollars expended in the " **war** on **cancer** " have yielded almost nothing by way of a cure , that there has been a tragic and marked increase in **cancer** since World **War** II . During the 1930s there was a

# Violence metaphors for (terminal) illness

Rita SMITH (The Times, Mar. 1, 2013): 'Rita, died peacefully after a brave battle against cancer on 20th February 2013, aged 83 years. Beloved wife of the late Victor, mother of Quentin...'

## PYLE David William: Obituary

PYLE David William David sadly passed away peacefully at home on Wednesday 5th February after a long and painful illness which he challenged with formidable strength, bravery and courage. Greatly...



Published in the Hull Daily Mail on 11th February 2014

[See announcement](#)



Faith Salazar  
@P0yt



 Follow

@CoyCaballes succumbed to cancer an hour ago, while he was under surgery. He fought a good fight. Thankful for our 10 years of friendship.

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8

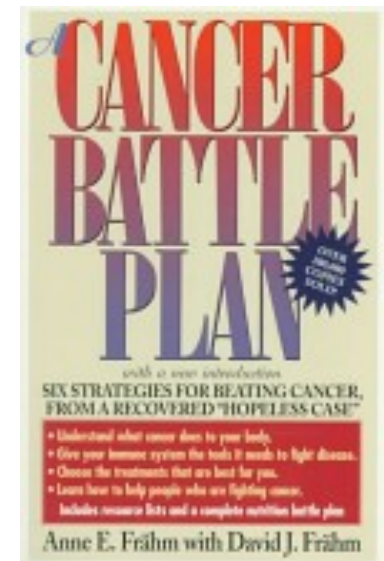
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# Criticism of Violence metaphors

- ‘Military’/ ‘War’/ ‘Battle’/ ‘Fight’ metaphors have been **widely criticised**, especially in relation to cancer (e.g. Sontag 1979), for their associations with violence and aggression, for the implication that the enemy is inside and that not getting better is defeat, and so on.
- They have been **systematically avoided** in some recent official documents in the UK: e.g. the 2007 Cancer Reform Strategy contains no references to ‘war’, ‘battle’ or ‘fight’, but rather talks about a cancer ‘journey’, with clinical ‘pathways’ delineated as models of care.





# Voices in favour of Violence metaphors for (terminal) illness

‘So we fought, we struggled, we triumphed. It was an exhilarating fight, and I’d repeat the fight today without a moment’s hesitation. We fought together, we lived together’

TALKS | TED PARTNER SERIES

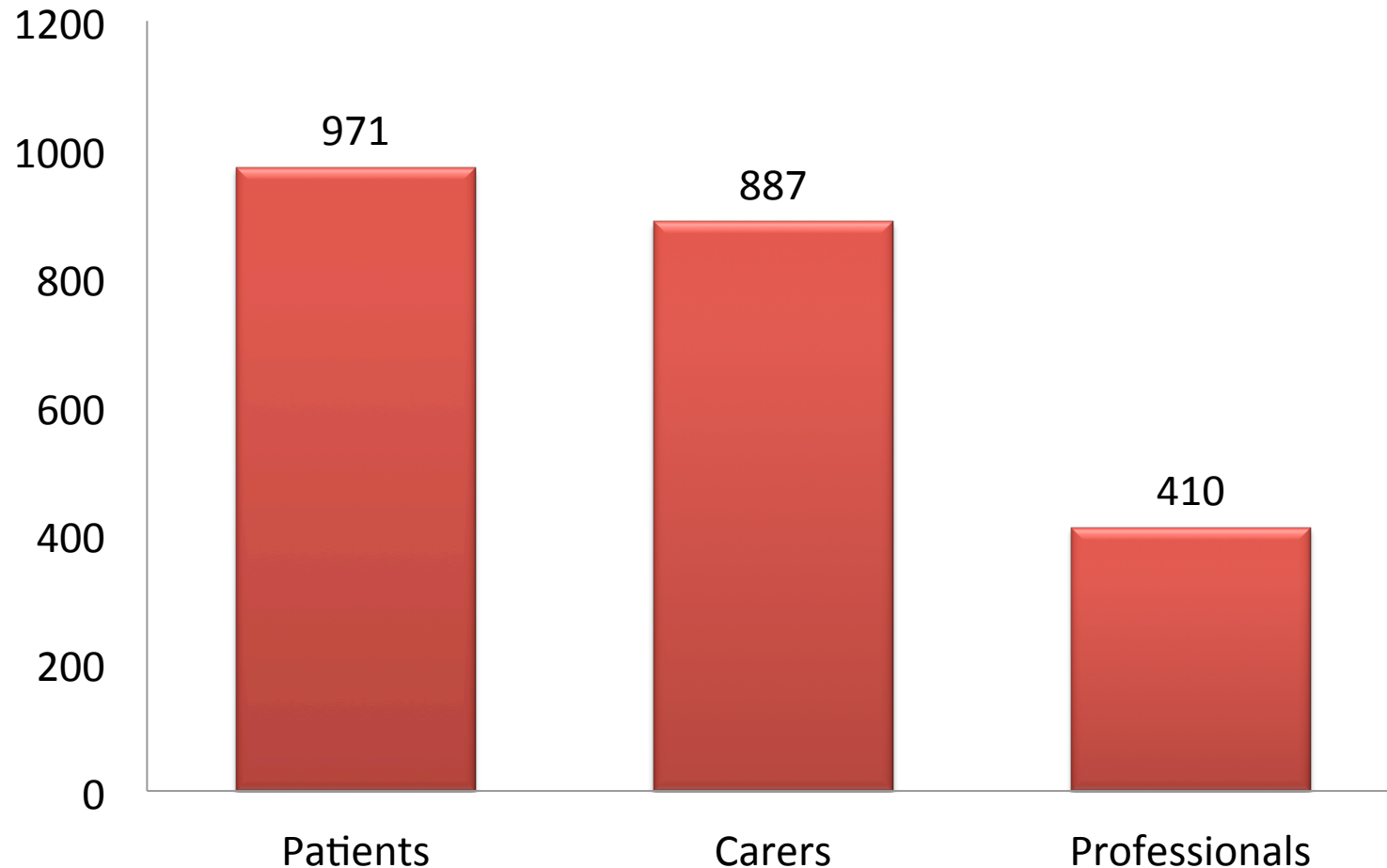
Amanda Bennett: We need a heroic narrative for death

FILMED APR 2013 - POSTED OCT 2013 - TEDMED 2013

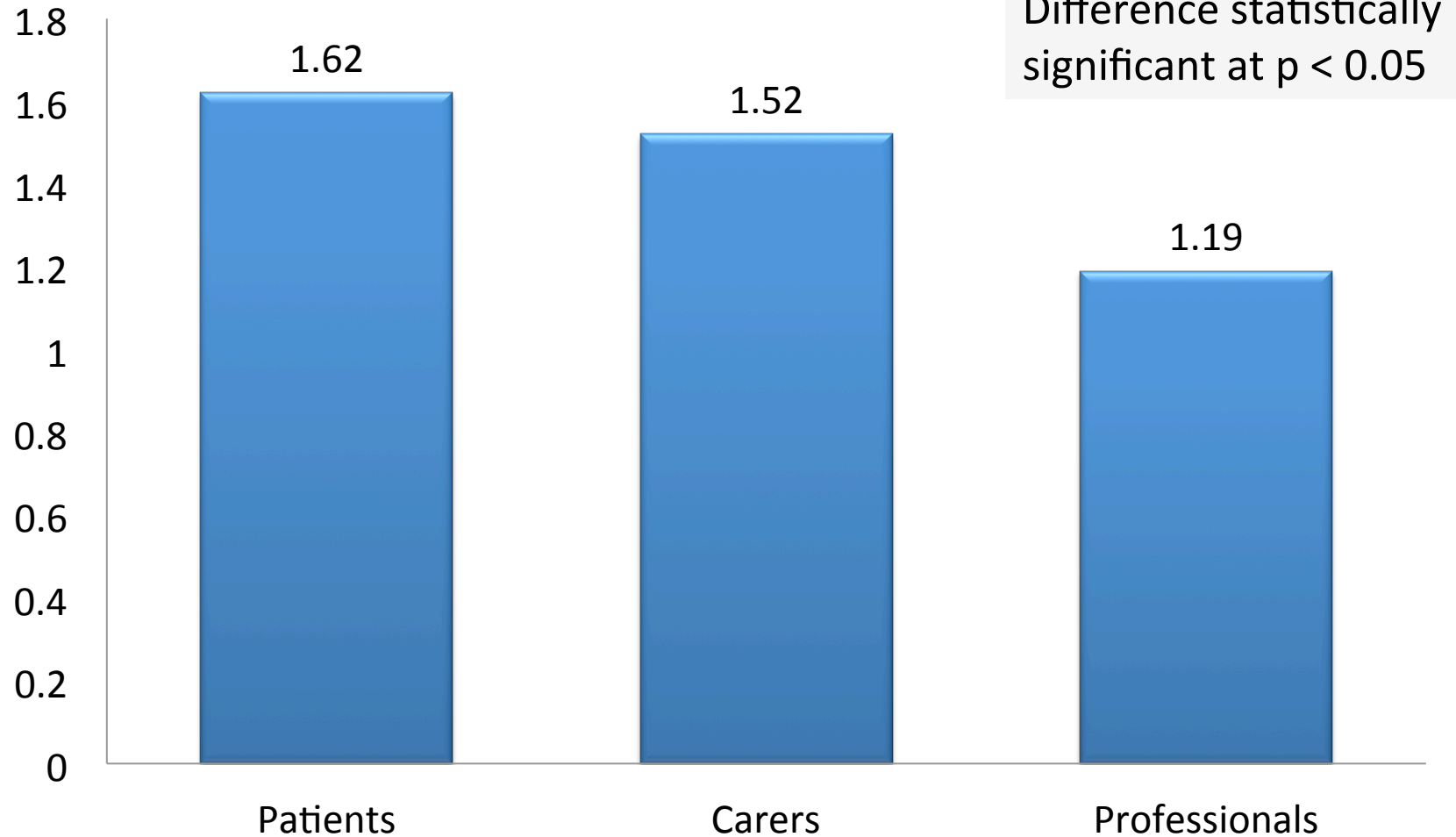


‘And during Terence’s illness, I, we, we wanted to believe the story of our fight together too. Giving up the fight ... meant giving up not only his life but also our story, our story of us as fighters, the story of us as invincible.’

# Violence metaphors in our data: raw frequency by stakeholder group



# Violence metaphors: frequency per 1,000 words



# A concordance of Violence metaphors in the patient data

e of days I 'll have a whole load of info	bombarded	at me !! I 've just accepted your friend	4
o be positive with everyone 's pity being	bombarded	at me . She has literally just sent anothe	5
at or a moan . I am fast becoming a chemo	veteran	as I am on my third lot just now ( fec , t	6
ow to whiteness a watercolour sun shining	defuse	through the branches like gentle fingers t	7
some bright scientist will find the magic	bullet	to end all the type of suffering we and ou	8
ds="239"> Anthony Chemo can be a powerful	weapon	which can halt or slow down the progressio	9
f against the demon but have picked up my	sword	and taken the fight to the demon , so yes	10
th which is mine . Give me the key to the	armoury	so I may choose a weapon and load the magi	11
the key to the armoury so I may choose a	weapon	and load the magic bullet to dispatch with	12
I may choose a weapon and load the magic	bullet	to dispatch without mercy this most unwort	13
bles to be fought before you can win this	war	. Steve x </post> <post thread="mm12_26888	14
d at the time , not sure if I like my mug	shot	but I thought it was a good idea to put a	15
" date="2010-04-22 13:43:00" words="132">	Battle Cry	Do I wither or retreat from this weary bat	16
is weary battle ? Will I surely lose this	war	, or will the positive cries of those abou	17
spur me on as if I were at the head of an	army	ten thousand strong set on chasing down th	18
" date="2010-04-22 13:49:00" words="160">	Battle cry	Do I wither or retreat from this weary bat	19
om this weary battle and surely lose this	war	, or will the positive cries of those abou	20
s if I were at the head of a ten thousand	army	to chase down this cruel and unworthy mena	21
o dear friends let me hear you scream the	battle cry	to spur us on to win this war . </post> <p	22
the battle cry to spur us on to win this	war	. </post> <post thread="mm12_27272" author	23
ay hopefully they will discover the magic	bullet	that just targets the cancer cells , and t	24
also works two days a week at Northampton	General	and says they discussed me in their multi-	25
r for a name and contact details and then	bombard	your Mac-nurse will all the questions and	26

# The patient data: too many battles...

- **Disease against patient:** ‘But the emotional side of cancer and of BC in particular is the real killer - it strangles and shocks your soul’
- **Treatment/doctors against patients:** ‘what did i think all my normal little cells were doing after being hit by a sledgehammer of both toxic chemicals and radiation’
- **Patient against disease:** ‘I’m ... also sharpening my weapons in case I have to do battle’
- **Patient against (hospital) situation:** ‘my secret weapon is keeping the ultra sound at the hospital on side’

# The patient data: too many battles...

- **Patients against health professionals:** ‘We won that battle but imagine what would have happened if she hadn’t had a family to defend her?’
- **Patients against family/friends:** ‘Although he has been really caring we still snipe and argue out of the blue nearly every day.’
- **Patients against themselves:** ‘I am destroying myself with my mind right now, torturing myself’;  
‘So I woke up this morning and gave a very large kick to myself!’

# Violence metaphors: disempowering or empowering?

## (Dis)empowerment:

- An increase or decrease in the degree of agency that somebody has.
- Agency can be as a reaction to something that happens (outside of the person's control) or control over what happens in the first place.
- Such agency can be used for the person's own benefit.
- Agency (or lack thereof) can be expressed semantically and/or grammatically.

# ...but are all the battles bad?

## Violence metaphors and disempowerment

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'I feel such a failure  
that I am not winning  
this battle.'

'it must be dispiriting when  
you are battling as hard as  
you can, not to be given the  
armour to fight in.'

'I am a walking time  
bomb.'



# Violence metaphors and empowerment

'I am such a fighter'

'my consultants recognised that I was a born fighter'

'we are young women with families but that is our trump card, that alone is my desire to fight and win'

'Your words though have given me a bit more of my fighting spirit back. I am ready to kick some cancer butt!'

'I don't intend to give up; I don't intend to give in. No I want to fight it. I don't want it to beat me, I want to beat it. ... It's a hard job but in the long run I hope to achieve ... we'll achieve something.'

# Mutual solidarity and encouragement

- ‘Soldier on everybody’
- ‘you are such a fighter’
- ‘I ... wanted to know if there are any other younger bowel cancer fighters amongst us’
- ‘let me hear you scream the battle cry to spur us on to win this war.’
- ‘Glad to hear you’re still smiling , still winning that battle.’

# Mutual solidarity and encouragement

11 occurrences.

e what the top one is ... I think Brigadier is my favourite ... what 's yours  
And which numbers would those be Brigadier eh ? eh ? you saying we are mental  
:00" words="172"> hey , well done Brigadier , you found it ! Did the sat nav h  
stine is too busy out boozing and Brigadier John wo n't find me if I take a qu  
8-24 22:45:00" words="128"> ha ha Brigadier , you found out my smuggling secre  
. ha ha even better . Sleep tight Brigadier and a big hug xxx </post> <post th  
11-08-26 21:23:00" words=  
but I do n't care cos a  
s ) so you are all invit  
nded me , have n't heard  
20:59:00" words="79"> D

'I would promote you but a) i  
think you have reached top  
rank already and b) I can't  
think of other ranks'

cos  
er for a few days ... you can ... lower gone to your head and you n  
ly want to be my sister ... Touche ... and I am quite open and modern  
11-09-03 10:15:00" words="79"> see Colon See ? Look what you have done to

4 occurrences.

don ( can I stay on the site now commandant Christine ? ) I have to say that  
sort of alcohol around ( unless commandant Christine has been around ) but y  
i am safe for a while longer ... Commandant Christine is too busy out boozing  
Brigadier John , even being camp commandant wo n't save you from this lot ...

# The persistence of 'Adversarial' metaphors for illness



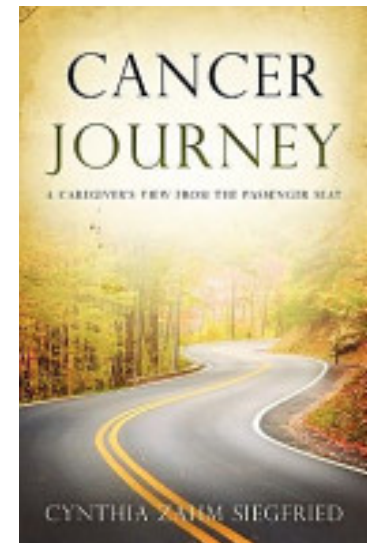
“She lost her brave fight.” If anyone mutters those words after my death, wherever I am, I will curse them.

[...]

In my world, having cancer is not a fight at all. It is almost a symbiosis where I am **forced** to live with my disease day in, day out. Some days cancer has the **upper hand**, other days I do. I live with it and I let its physical and emotional effects wash over me. But I don't fight it. After all, cancer has arisen from within my own body, from my own cells. To fight it would be "waging a war" on myself. I have used chemotherapy on two occasions to **bring** the cancer **back under control** and alter the natural history of the disease. I submitted myself to this treatment gently, and somewhat reluctantly, taking whatever each day had to **throw at** me. I certainly didn't enter the process "with all guns blazing". (Kate Granger, *The Guardian*, 25/4/2014)

# Journey metaphors: empowering?

Cancer is a journey, some people have similar experiences to others on that journey, but by and large the journey has many twists and turns that means no two people go the exact same route. I think it is like trying to drive a coach and horses uphill with no back wheels on the coach. You do need to stop occasionally and rest the horses, review the situation with your husband.

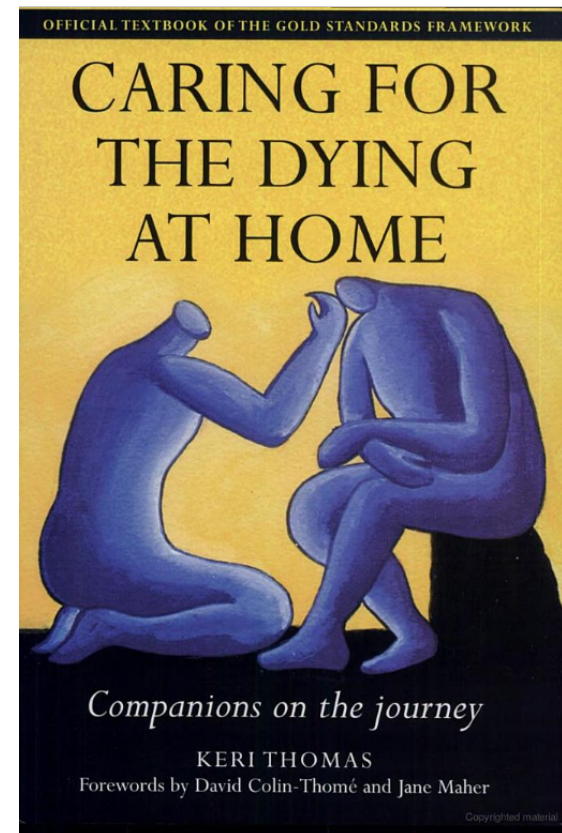


'A Caregiver's View from the Passenger Seat'

# Mutual solidarity and encouragement

## Patients/Carers are travelling companions

- ‘I feel exactly as you described, this is an awful journey we are going through but we are all here for each other’
- ‘Safe journey’
- ‘you are not alone, I have walked the same pathway as you for the last three years’
- ‘Continued strength to everyone on this journey, whatever your situation, we are united in our journeys to slay the BC Beast : )’



# Mutual solidarity and encouragement



## Patients/Carers guide each other

- 'The rocks in our paths are easier to handle when we're all in it together ... the best people to help you are the ones who've been there before or are heading there with you'
- 'you extend you [sic] hand and kind thoughts helping people find their own path but aided by the light you shine for them'
- 'we will try to help you on this journey you have *been forced* to take'

# Journey metaphors and empowerment



**Illness is a travelling companion:** ‘On my journey so far with cancer I have learnt to expect the worst.’

**Grieving is a journey:** ‘After all you have been through while he was ill you have stepped onto a different kind of journey now.’

## Professionals guide patients:

- ‘Marie Curie nurses ... did everything for me and made Terry’s journey a lot less stressful.’
- ‘As doctors we are both the mechanics of the car and counsellor to the driver. We have been trained to repair the car and to help the driver travel as far as they may. We do not like to abandon a vehicle by the side of the road without at least trying to gain an extra mile or so for the driver.’



# Journey metaphors and disempowerment



‘I only pop by every now and again because it saddens my heart to read of the passengers nearing the end of their journey and those recently having finished their journey.’

‘Well, I have not done so well with my own “cancer journey” through the wilderness of my own local hospitals.’

‘[the family] now appeared to be in a strange and uniquely vulnerable state, waiting to *be told* what would happen next, waiting to *be led* forwards’

‘After much discussion the patient *was discharged* home on a palliative pathway with a life expectancy of a few weeks’

# Concluding remarks on Violence and Journey metaphors



- Both Violence and Journey metaphors are (still) regularly used by all three stakeholder groups.
- There is no single 'War metaphor' or 'Journey metaphor': patients use a variety of Violence and Journey metaphors to talk about a wide range of experiences.
- Violence metaphors can sometimes have a positive, empowering function, such as expressing personal determination and mutual solidarity.
- Journey metaphors can sometimes be used in disempowering ways, with little semantic and/or grammatical agency for patients and carers.
- The specific meanings, associations and functions of particular uses of metaphors can only be properly explained in terms of the individual linguistic expressions and the scenarios they evoke.

# So what?

- Both the *negative* and the *positive* attitudes, emotions and experiences that are expressed by means of Violence and Journey metaphors need to be addressed in the provision of healthcare.
- A blanket rejection of Violence metaphors would deprive some patients of the positive functions that these metaphors can have.
- An uncritical acceptance of Journey metaphors overlooks the disempowering ways in which it can be used.
- Criticisms often relate to a few words, but the larger concept (e.g. illness as adversary) may be inevitable.
- The problem is not individual words or a particular broad metaphor, but the **passivisation** of the patient that may result from some specific uses of metaphor.

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Thank you.

Any questions?

<http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/melc/>

A large, solid red curved shape in the bottom right corner of the slide, resembling a quarter-circle or a stylized 'C' shape.