The language of cancer communication in Africa

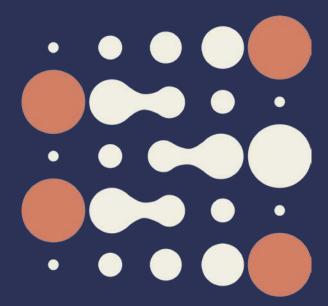
Hannah Simba, Miriam Mutebi, Efua Prah, Adamu Addissie, Moses Galukande, Elom Aglago, Lydia Genene, Yahya Mahamat Saleh, Bernadette Chimera, Justina Onwuka, Grace Akinyi Odongo, Felix Oyinje, Melitah Motlhale, Clement Narh, Joachim Schüz, Valerie McCormack

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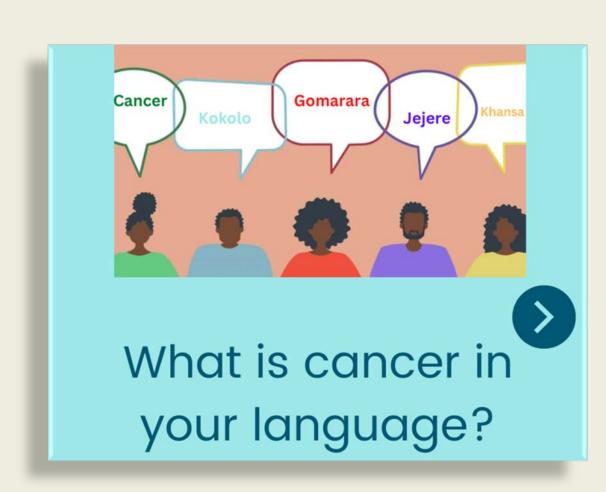
International Agency for Research on Cancer





Introduction/Background/Motivation

- Communication is an essential aspect of cancer care and research
- Largely understudied and neglected in the African setting.
- To conduct a survey of cancer terms in African languages that;
- Highlights linguistic ethno-cultural diversity
- Investigates what these terms mean in English
- To identify thematic areas in the English translated terms



Design



International Agency for Research on Cancer



The Language of Cancer Communication in Africa

Dear Participant

Thank you for taking the time to read and participate in this survey. We provide a brief introduction here and the survey follows.



Cancer

Biopsy

Radiotherapy

Palliation

Tumour

Chronic

Staging

Reccur

Benign

Metastasis

Surgery

Survival

Malignant

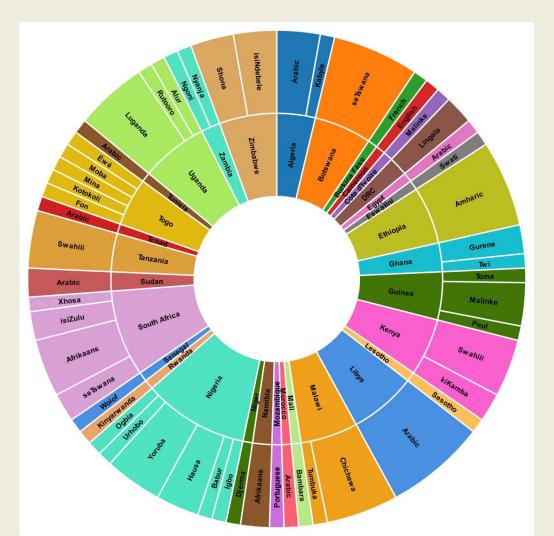
Chemotherapy

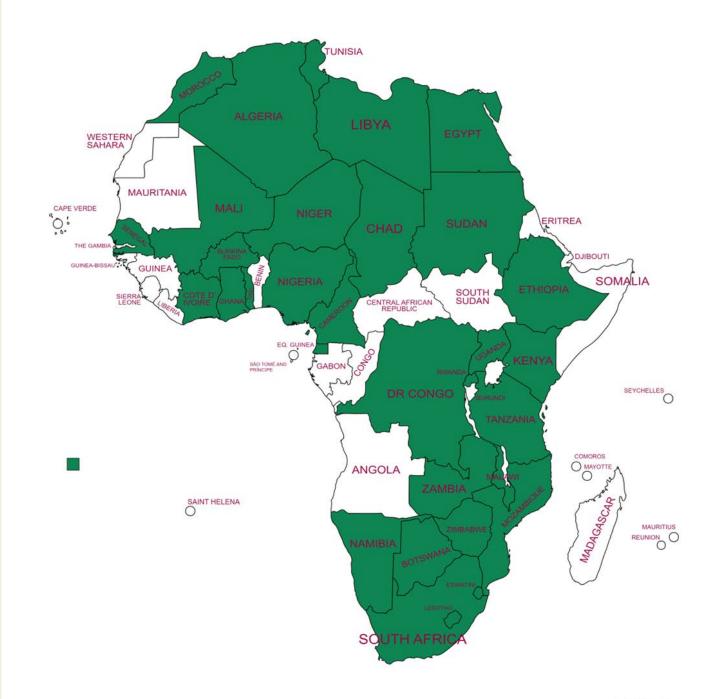
Trial

Remission

Results

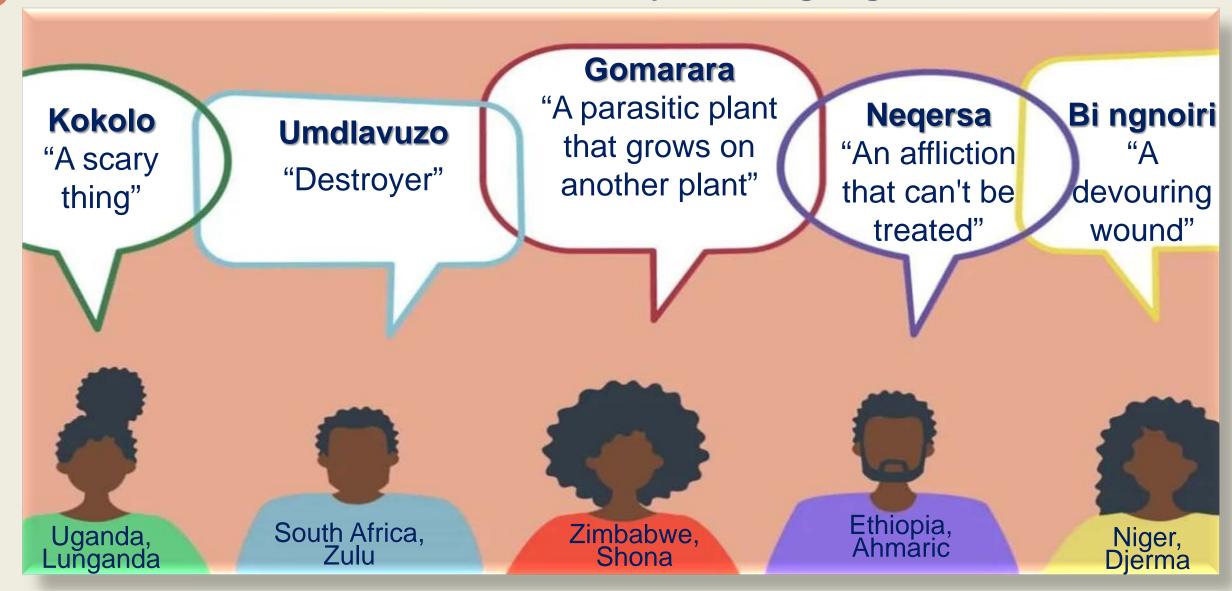
107 responses from 32 countries44 Languages



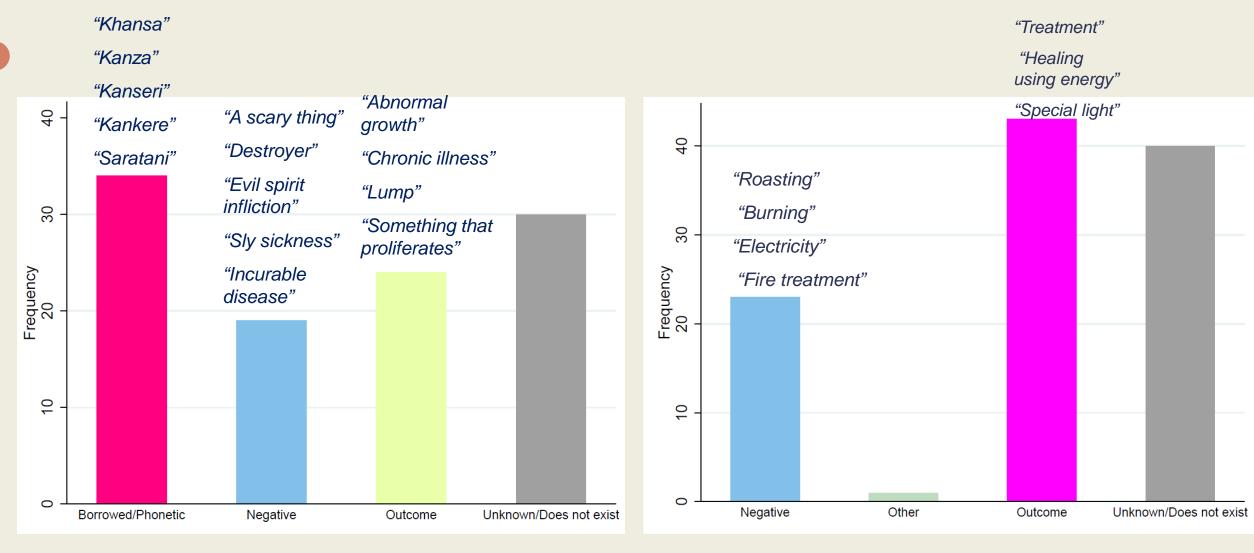


Results

What is cancer in your language?



Results: Themes



Results

Participant from Zimbabwe who speaks Shona

"The use of some terms like "burning treatment" with respect to chemotherapy and radiation therapy represent a common mistranslation in our setting.......There is great need to correct health worker and public understanding of cancer treatment terms in local languages to remove a potential barrier to treatment utilization in our setting"

Participant from Ghana who speaks Gurene

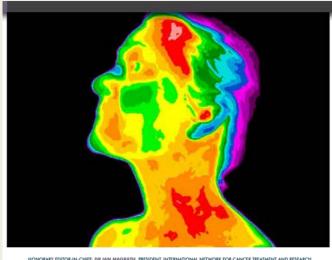
"Generally, little vocabulary is known to describe cancer in my language, or perhaps I know very little about my language. Usually we tend to describe or explain the English word in the local language using the nearest in meaning words"

Discussion and Conclusions

We envision that information collected from this survey and our report will highlight the state of cancer communication in Africa and serve as platform for future in-depth work on the topic given the multiplicities of languages and cultures across the Continent.

- Studies investigating the impact of these terminologies on
 - Communication
 - Stigma
 - Patients' interactions with the health care system
- Development of terminology alternatives (TB terminology guide)

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The language of cancer communication in Africa

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Effective communication plays a crucial role in cancer prevention, early detection and care. Despite its importance it has unfortunately been given insufficient attention, particularly within the African context where it remains an understudied and neglected issue. Barriers in cancer communication can foster stigma and disempowerment among both patients and healthcore professionals. Communication challenges between healthcore professionals and patients are not confined to a specific region—it's a widespread issue across the world, and across cultures and sociodemographic groups within a highly mobile globalized world. Healthcare professionals grapple with difficulties in conveying information to patients due to linguistic differences (1,2). This not only shapes patients' interactions with the health system but also influences their perception of cancer, its preventability and treatability. Language, with its

Key take-home messages

- Cancer terminology for diagnosis and treatment exists in African languages to very variable extents.
- Cancer terminology in African languages may contribute to fear, disparities for patients, and pose communication difficulties for Health Professionals.
- Only 31% of oncology healthcare professionals indicated strong confidence in cancer communication with patients in the local language.
- This work serves as a platform for future in-depth work on the topic given the multiplicities of languages and cultures across the continent.
- Development of terminology alternatives for instance for "radiotherapy", which
 is translated as "being burnt" or "roasting" in a number of languages are
 needed.