



College of

Nursing

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

# ANNOUNCEMENT OF DOCTORAL FINAL EXAMINATION For Michelle R. Closner, MN, RN

**Tuesday, June 15, 2021, 8:00 AM**

ZOOM: <https://wsu.zoom.us/j/97819423070?pwd=YnNBdEpvdWwzcTlJdXJlTm55bmJVQT09>

Meeting ID: 978 1942 3070

Passcode: 505090

## **“HOW WILL WE TELL THEM?” REVEALING A PARENT’S CANCER DIAGNOSIS TO CHILDREN**

### Abstract

#### **Dissertation Chair: Dr. Mel R. Haberman, PhD**

Cancer survivors undergo debilitating treatments that challenge health-related quality of life, especially during active disease or relapse. A critical issue for a parent living with cancer is deciding how to communicate with the young children living at home about the parent’s diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment. Parents want to protect their children from the effects of their illness, which in turn may constrain both the communication process and the disclosure of the content.

**Methods:** Corbin and Strauss’s (1990, 2008, 2015) grounded theory with a critical feminist approach guided the development of a substantive theoretical model. The critical feminist approach assisted with the interview process and informed the analysis of the data. The substantive theory provided a definition of concepts discovered and themes, subthemes, and narrative exemplars. The data set was reduced to five overarching themes; *The start of the journey, Don't let the children get lost in the process, I may be groggy, but I am functioning, Be honest but shield them from the really ugly parts, and Are you ok?* and one grand theme, *"There are many ways to tell children about a parent's cancer diagnosis,"* that captured all the narrative data.

**Implications:** This study addressed gaps in the literature by describing the challenges, barriers, and facilitators in the process of disclosing a parent’s experience of living with cancer to their children. The generated substantive theoretical model provided descriptive evidence of the ways in which parents communicate a diagnosis of cancer to young children ages 7–18 living in the home. This foundational knowledge will ultimately result in the development and testing of communication modules that will guide how oncology nurses can coach parents in effective tactics for disclosing cancer to young children. This research may lead to the expansion and clarification of best practices regarding disclosing a parent’s cancer diagnosis to the patient’s children.