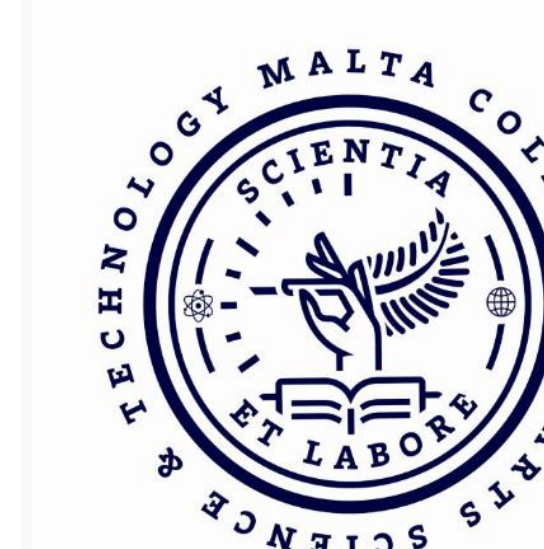


# Complementary Therapies for Cancer Patients: A Narrative Inquiry from the Perspective of Health Care Professionals in Diverse Contexts



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## Problem Statement

- Central Research Question:** What are the practitioners' perceptions regarding the reciprocal effects of diverse complementary therapy (CT) approaches when they are received alongside mainstream cancer care?
- How do diverse Maltese and foreign practitioners perceive and relate to the use of CTs by cancer patients?
- What actions can be taken within the local health sector in order to increase the patients' awareness and knowledge of the efficacy and safe use CTs?

## Research Approach

- This research study aims to gain the in-depth experience of six participants, therefore, a **qualitative** research design using **narrative inquiry** was adopted.
- It is **cross-sectional study** that portrays a **longitudinal perspective** through the professional years of experience that the research participants have within the oncology domain.
- Participants are purposefully selected, and data is collected through **narrative interviewing**.
- Each interview was transcribed and analysed using **thematic narrative analysis**.

## Project Overview

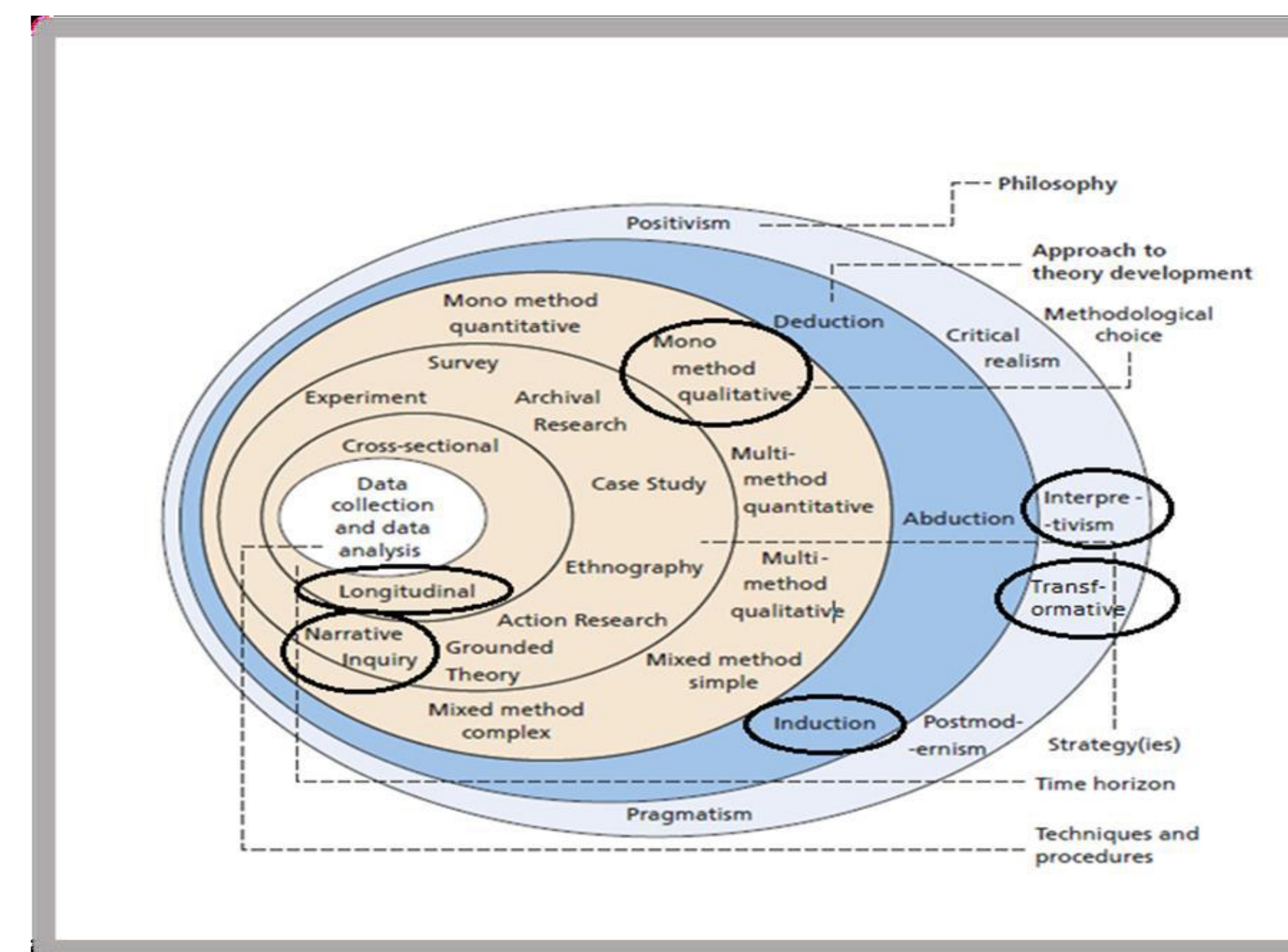
Each of the practitioner's experience provides further meaning and understanding on the efficacy of CTs and their reciprocal beneficial effects when received simultaneously with mainstream cancer interventions.

The experience of six participants is explored in relation to their unique context:

MALTESE PARTICIPANTS	FOREIGN PARTICIPANTS
Consultant oncologist	Clinical complementary practitioner / critical care nurse
Clinical psychologist	Clinical complementary practitioner
Complementary practitioner	Clinical complementary practitioner

## Methodology

Narrative Inquiry



The Research Onion: adapted from Saunders et al. (2019: 130)

## Research Propositions

The main research objective is to explore and gain further meaning and understanding on the efficacy of CTs and their impact on the holistic well-being of cancer patients. However, further sub-objectives compose of:

- To understand and analyse the reciprocal effects of CTs on cancer patients, through the experiences of diverse practitioners, who work within the oncology domain.
- To explore the use of essential oils by cancer patients and the various modalities in which they could be administered.
- To gain insight and understanding of the practices implemented by the local and foreign oncology centres through which CTs are integrated into the cancer patients' pathway.
- To acquire and analyse the diverse professionals' unique accounts and collective shared narrative elements in order to gain a view of the phenomenon under study from various perspectives and differing contexts.

## References

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## Research Objectives

This narrative inquiry demonstrates the current local situation in terms of practical implications and policies. Furthermore, a change in local practice can be instigated by:

- Understanding the human experience and its significance to the individual,
- Providing a holistic and objective view of the use of CTs and their perceived benefits,
- Identifying the liminalities between the local and foreign contexts, thus adding further insight into the ways in which local service providers can provide accredited educational programmes for diverse HCPs,
- Presenting a model that might enable CTs to be effectively integrated within an oncology patient's treatment protocol and so, enhancing the provision of CT services to the Maltese oncology patients,

## Key Figures

Process-focused model

- Recommendations for further education – addressing the need for clinical CT therapists**  
VET Colleges e.g. MCAST enhance their curriculum by providing full-time or part-time learning programmes encompassing clinical CTs. This will fulfil the imminent need for more human resources in this area.
- Recommendations for further education – HCPs who work within an oncology setting**  
Resulting from the HCPs' increased knowledge of CTs, there will be more active referral regardless of the stage the patients are at.
- Recommendations for information that is accessible and widely available to the patients**  
This will result in the provision of several outlets through which patients can access reliable information.
- Recommendations for a designated area at the local state oncology hospital**  
This area will serve as a place where patients can avail themselves of different complementary therapies and also be instructed on how to self-administer particular modalities.
- The inclusion of diverse complementary therapies within the patients' pathway**  
CTs will become an integral aspect of the medical care plan.
- Patients will receive additional support through legitimate complementary therapies which are endorsed by the HCPs**  
CTs are received from qualified practitioners and visits become part of the medical record. The patients are diverted away from harmful alternatives.
- Complementary therapies will enhance the patients' well-being and quality of life.**  
Patients can rest-assured that throughout their cancer trajectory, regardless of the stage they are at or whether they are receiving medical treatment or not, they can find the care and support that they require. Patients will also be taught life-long

This model is a progressive model which should be implemented in stages; hence the transformation will be gradual. It targets the local context, suggesting the actions that can be taken so that ultimately, legitimate CTs can be offered at the local state oncology hospital, as well as through other service providers within the private sector.

The provision of this service will improve the quality of life of cancer patients, and optimising patient support, whilst also proposing a significant shift in the Maltese HCPs perception of CTs.