

# Abstract

*"Cancer Treatment Prescription--Advancing Prospect Theory beyond Economics," in Journal of the American Medical Association Oncology, June, 2016. (Note to students: This article and abstract are fictitious.)*

**Importance** Cancer treatment is complex. We expect oncologists to make treatment decisions according to definitive standards of care. Finding out that prospect theory demonstrates that they react very much like most other people when deciding to recommend surgery or chemotherapy for their patients indicates that more self-reflection on oncologists' part could help patients make better decisions. (Prospect theory describes how people choose between alternatives that have risk when the probability of different outcomes is unknown.)

**Objective** to show whether prospect theory applies to how oncologists' framed their recommendations for surgery or chemotherapy for patients in good condition and bad condition.

**Design, Settings, and Participants** Records of 100 U.S. oncologists were examined for the years 2014 and 2015, which documented patient conditions and the way oncologists framed their recommendations regarding surgery or chemotherapy. Thus, a experimental ex post facto design was used for the study.

**Main Outcomes and Measures** This study explored the relationship between the way in which the oncologists "framed" the choice of surgery or chemotherapy as they made recommendations to patients, the patients' conditions, and the choice actually made. Those results were compared to what prospect theory would predict for this situation.

**Results** Physicians seemed to present their recommendation of surgery or chemotherapy in a loss frame (e.g., "This is likely to happen to you if you don't have this procedure") when patients' conditions were poor and in a gain frame (e.g., "By having this procedure, you can probably dramatically cut your chances of reoccurrence") when their conditions were less poor. These results are what prospect theory would have predicted.

**Conclusions and Relevance** This study opens up the possibility that, as described by prospect theory, a person's choice of framing behaviour is not limited to how we naturally act for ourselves but includes how we act for other people, as the oncologists were acting on behalf of their patients. More research is necessary to confirm this line of evidence and determine whether oncologists' decision making and framing is the most effective and entirely according to the best standards of care.

Source ( Ohio State University Libraries, *Choosing and Using Sources: A Guide to Academic Research, Evaluating for Relevancy* [choosingsources@osu.edu](mailto:choosingsources@osu.edu). 2018)