

## **Graduate Symposium 2013**

**Title:** Coping With Pediatric Cancer: Conversational Methods Utilized by Parents and Children when Dealing with Pediatric Cancer

**Author:** Chelsi Morgan Walls

**Abstract:** This thesis sought to analyze how parents communicate with their child regarding pediatric cancer treatments. When dealing with pediatric cancer, it is vital that parents and their child communicate about the illness in order to effectively cope with the cancer. Using Uncertainty Management Theory, along with sub-concepts of the theory (i.e., appraisals, inferences, and illusions), this thesis sought to discover which coping mechanism (i.e., affect-management or buffering) would be chosen to manage the illness. Under UMT, appraisals were assessed, resulting in positive and negative appraisal, which indicated whether the individual handled the issue with either an inference based on general knowledge or illusion based on hopeful predictions. Based on the inference or illusion, a coping mechanism of either affect-management (i.e., faithism or disengagement), or buffering (avoidance or selective ignoring) is developed to cope with the illness. About 200 participants participated in this study via an on-line survey. The key concepts focused on participants' indication about how they would react to a hypothetical scenario involving parent/child communication about pediatric cancer treatments.