



### Introduction

- Older adults with advanced hematologic malignancies often have a poor understanding of their disease and prognosis.
- Knowledge of how patients' social networks inform and influence their decisions may guide interventions to improve their disease understanding and prognostic awareness.
- **Objective:** To explore how social networks influence patients' decision-making and disease understanding.

### Methods

#### Study sample

- N = 9 patients with incurable advanced hematologic malignancies (myeloid malignancies and multiple myeloma) diagnosed in the preceding six months
- $M_{age} = 77.7$  years (range: 66-91)
- 44% female, 56% single, 44% lived alone
- 44% and 33% screened positive for depression and cognitive impairment, respectively

#### Procedures

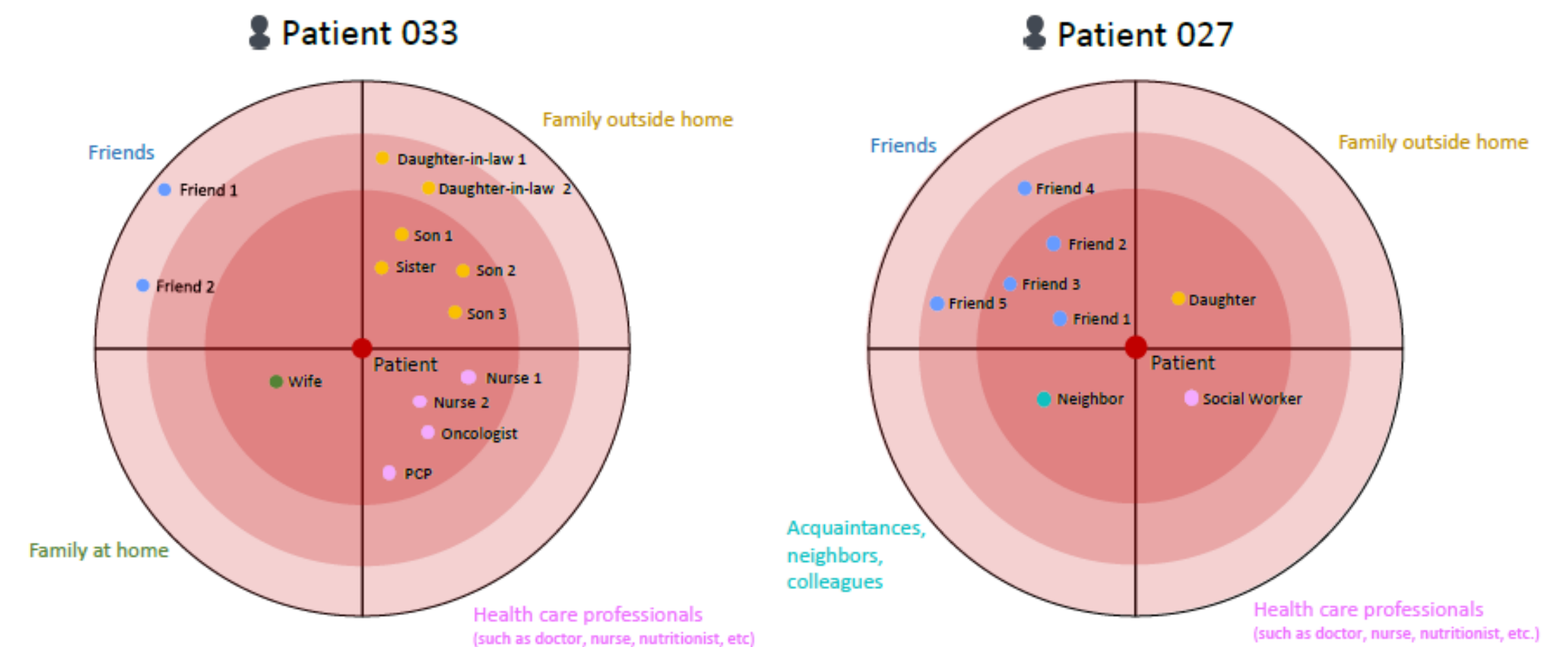
- Patients completed a geriatric assessment, a social network map, and demographics.
- Semi-structured interviews were conducted and transcribed.
- Four independent coders analyzed the transcripts using constant comparison method.

### Results

#### We identified three key themes:

#### 1. Structure of social networks varied in size (range: 7-18 contacts)

- Examples:



#### 2. Patient-oncologist communication was lacking

- Patients often provided vague descriptions of their diagnoses
- Patients were not aware of approximate survival nor did they ask their oncologist

#### 3. Patients utilized their individual social contacts differently

- Patients selectively shared and received disease-related information
- Patients withheld information from distant contacts and from those they did not wish to burden

### Conclusion

- Larger studies are needed to understand how social networks influence patients' decision-making and disease understanding in order to guide intervention development and improve communication.