

Fear of Cancer Recurrence and Sleep in Couples at the First Post-Treatment Mammogram for Early-Stage Breast Cancer

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BACKGROUND: Sleep disturbance is common in cancer survivors and its prevalence is greatest in individuals with breast cancer (BC). Emerging evidence points to fear of cancer recurrence (FCR) as a factor underlying impaired sleep in cancer survivors. However, limitations of prior work include:

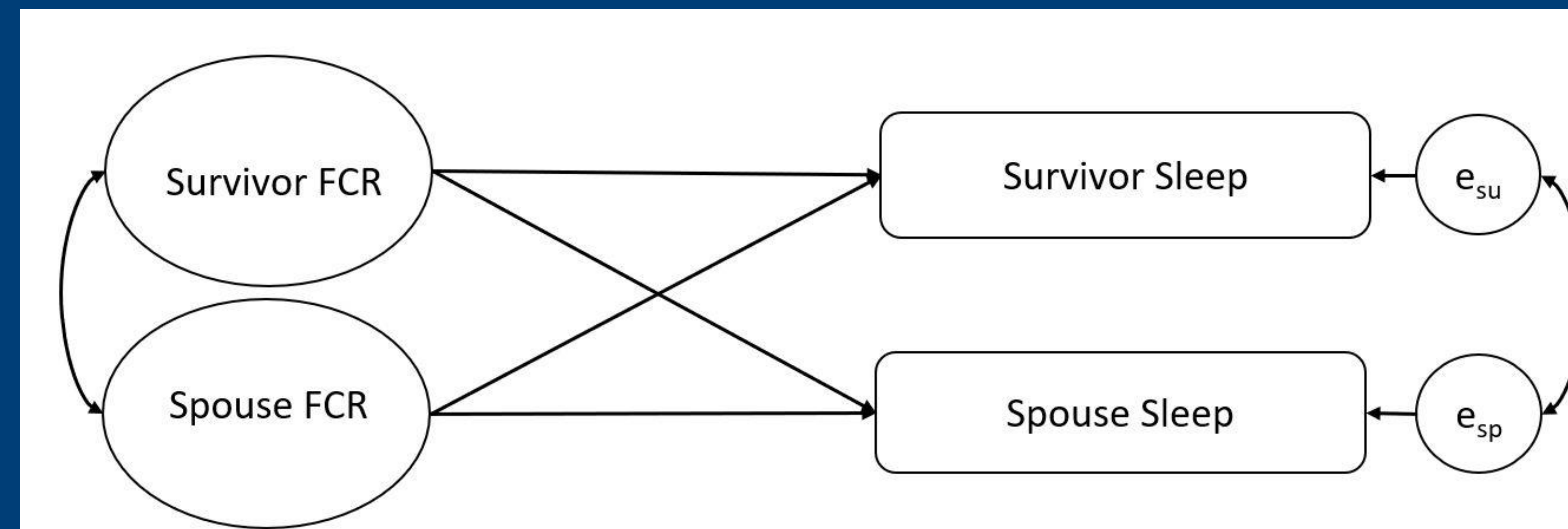
- Use of global, retrospective reports of sleep
- No focus on the link between FCR and sleep among spouses of survivors
- No study of these links as couples encounter real-life triggers (e.g., post-treatment mammograms)

METHODS:

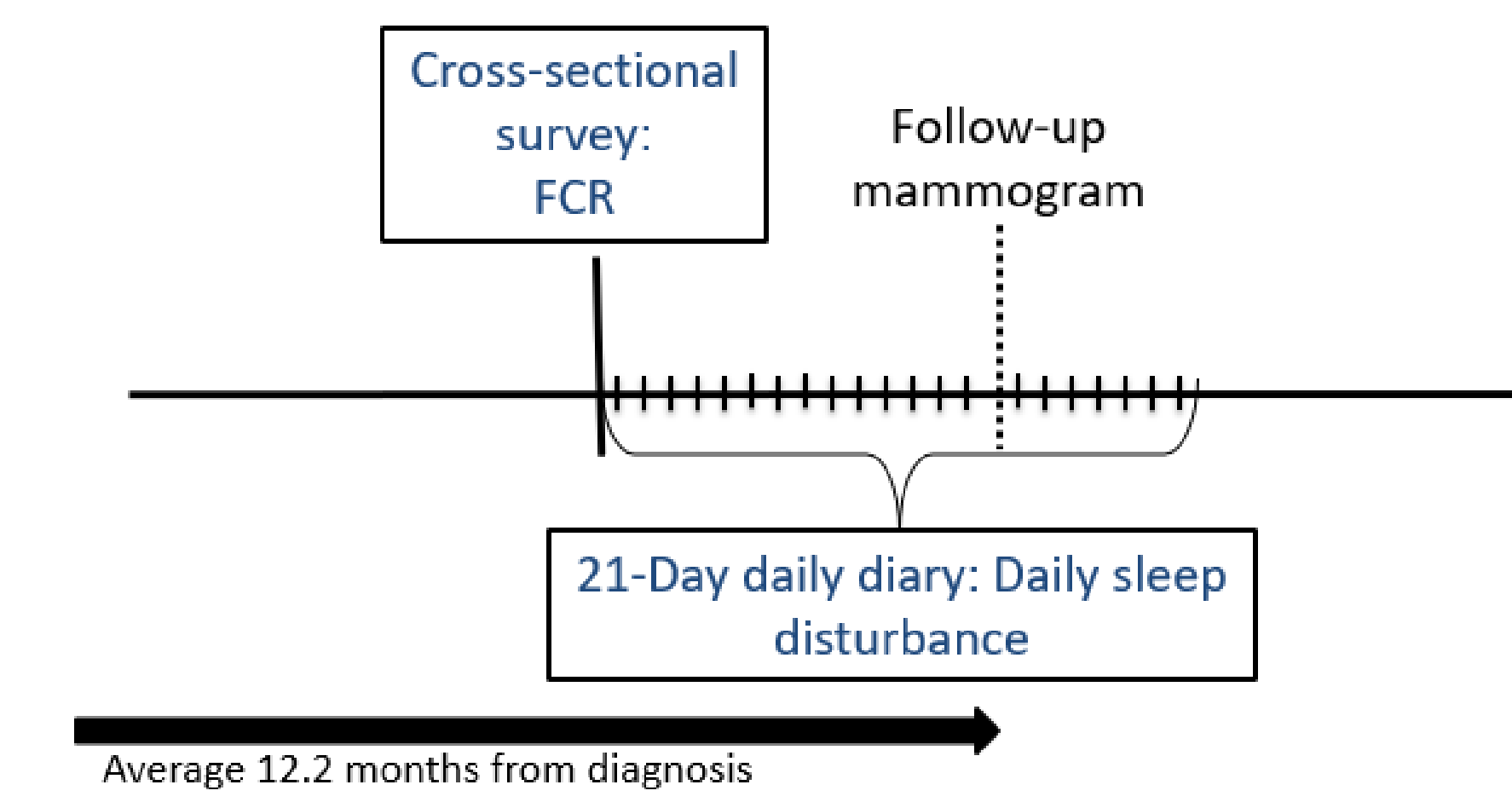
1. Couples coping with early-stage BC (N=57 couples; 114 paired individuals) reported sleep duration, quality, sleep onset latency, and wake after sleep onset each morning for 21 consecutive days spanning survivors' first post-treatment mammogram.
2. Three validated measures of global FCR were used to form latent survivor and spouse FCR factors.
3. Average daily sleep as well as sleep on the eve of the mammogram were regressed on both survivor and spouse FCR.



Fear of cancer recurrence and sleep disturbance are associated, both individually and across partners.



Actor-partner interdependence modeling – associations between a survivor's FCR and her own sleep and with her spouse's sleep were estimated simultaneously in each model.



RESULTS:

Average daily sleep:

1. Survivor FCR →
Survivor sleep: Reduced sleep duration & quality
Spouse sleep: Greater sleep onset latency
2. Spouse FCR →
Spouse sleep: Reduced sleep duration

Eve of the mammogram:

1. Survivor FCR →
Survivor sleep: Reduced sleep duration & quality
Spouse sleep: Greater sleep onset latency
2. Spouse FCR →
Survivor sleep: Greater sleep onset latency and wake after sleep onset
Spouse sleep: Reduced sleep duration & quality

Findings address gaps in knowledge on FCR and sleep, which has known implications for health and mortality.

