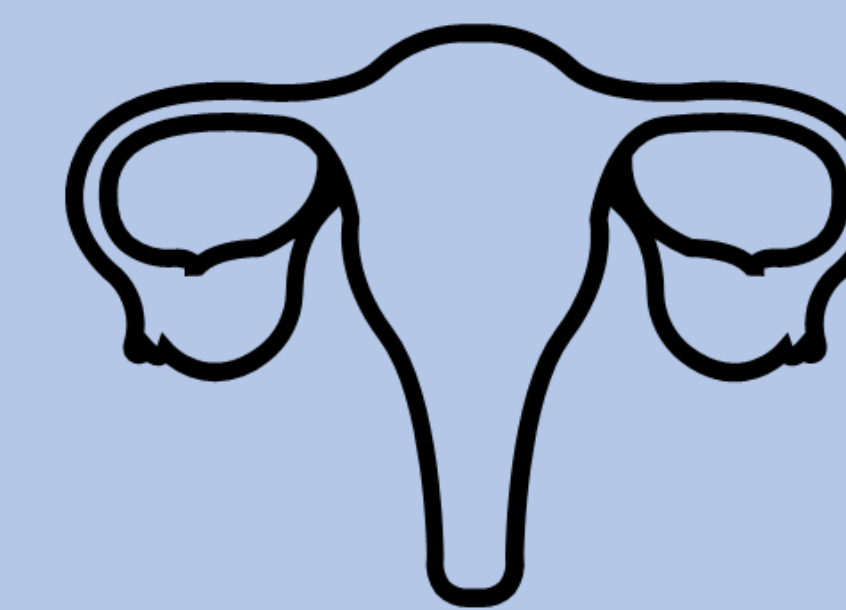




Background

Cancer is among the largest contributors to morbidity and mortality worldwide, accounting for 19 million new cases in 2020 alone¹. As the global cancer burden continues to rise, the volume of survivors also grows rapidly, giving rise to widespread survivorship challenges. Fear of cancer recurrence (FCR) defined as the worry that cancer will return or progress², is among the most common and debilitating survivorship concerns, reported by up to 79% of survivors³. Yet, many specific cancer groups are neglected throughout medical research. This scoping review aims to examine and summarise the current evidence from the literature on FCR among gynaecological cancer survivors.

Methodology

This scoping review was conducted in accordance with the Arksey and O'Malley methodological framework⁴, as is the gold standard for this methodology. Four main electronic databases were searched using comprehensive keywords and MeSH terms within three categories: gynaecological cancer terms, fear terms and recurrence terms to identify peer-reviewed primary studies published in English within the last 10 years. 16 articles were included for review and data was extracted in accordance with the SPIDER framework⁵. Finally, a narrative synthesis and thematic analysis was conducted to summarise the available data and identify patterns across the studies.

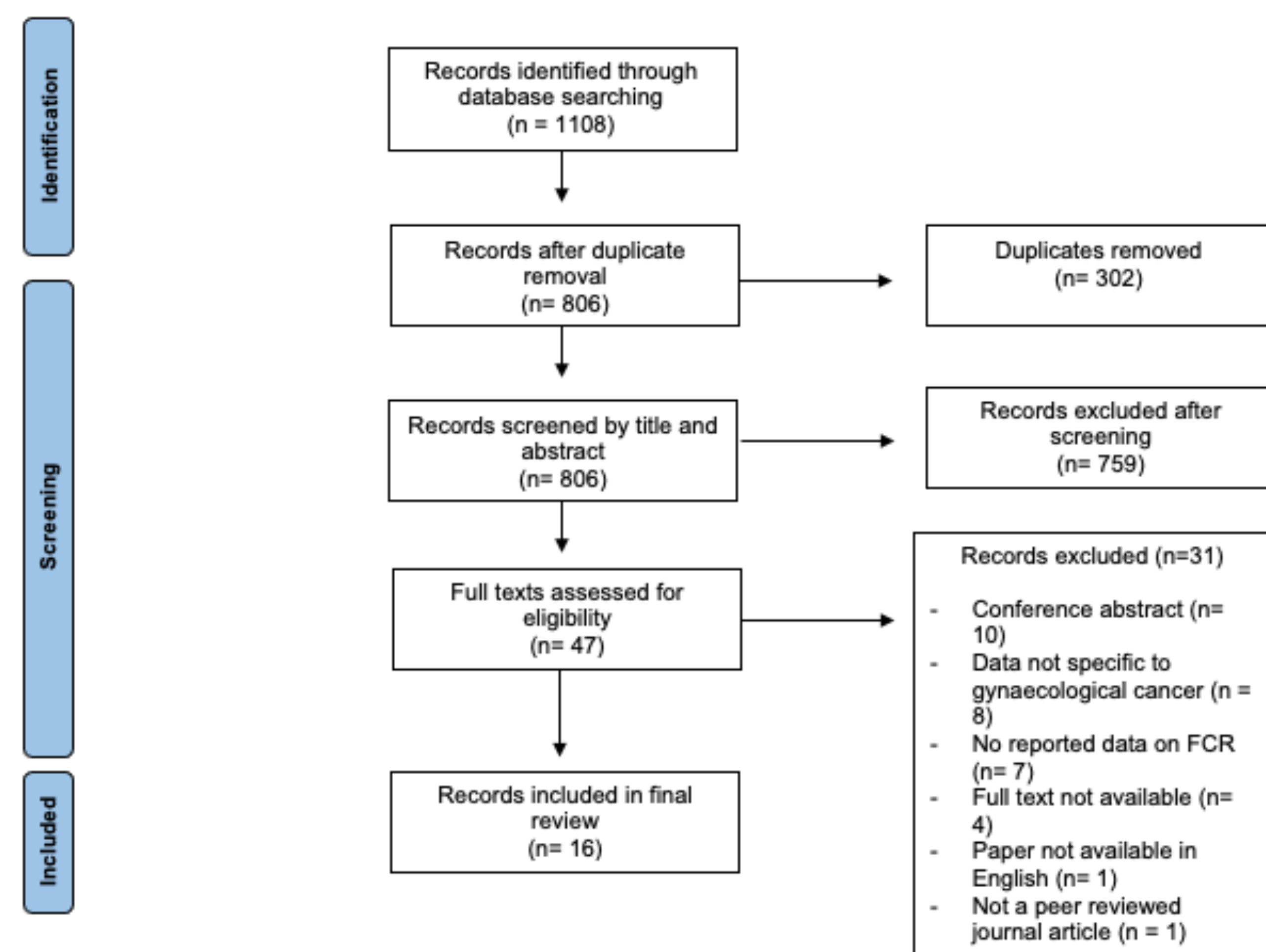


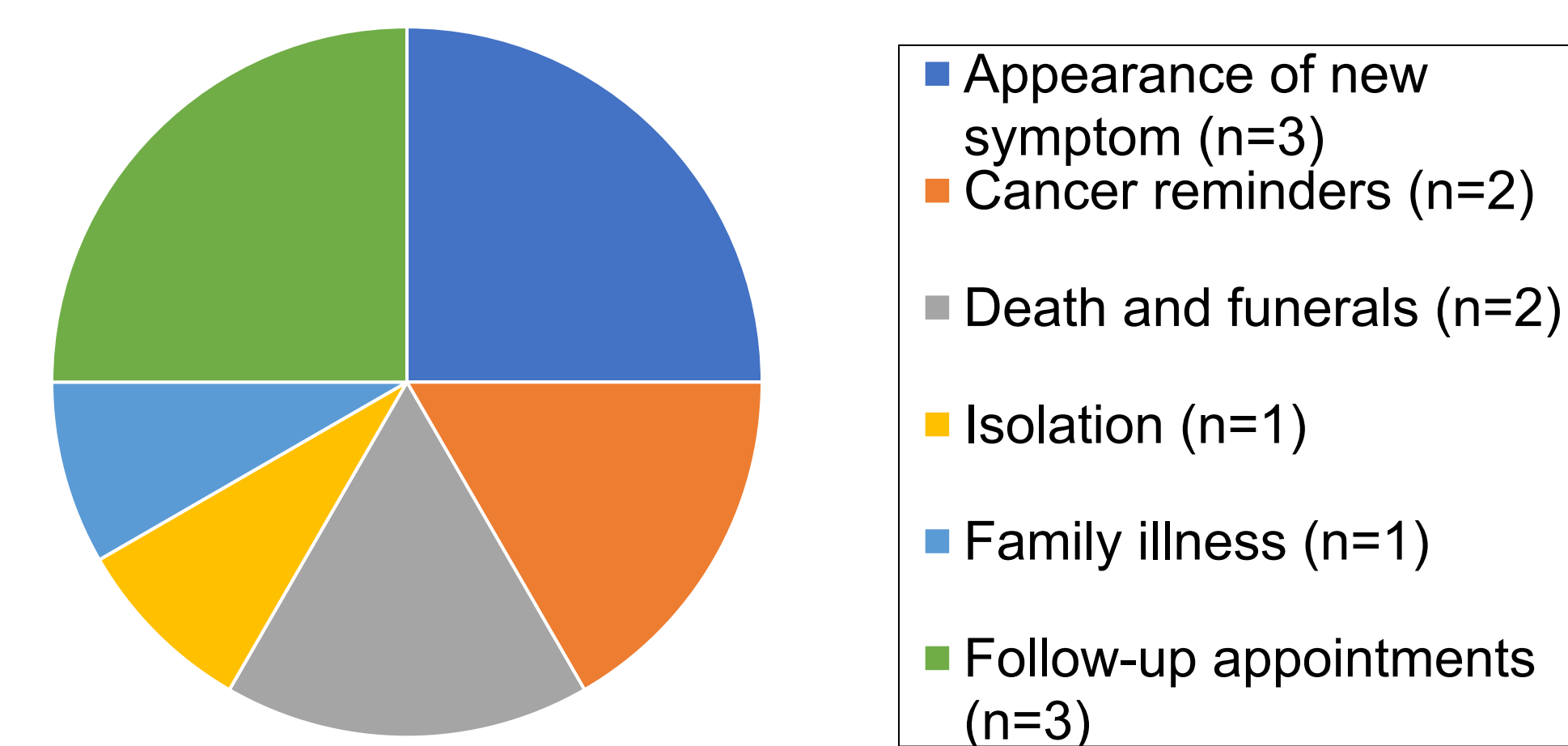
Figure 1: PRISMA flowchart for included & excluded studies

Results

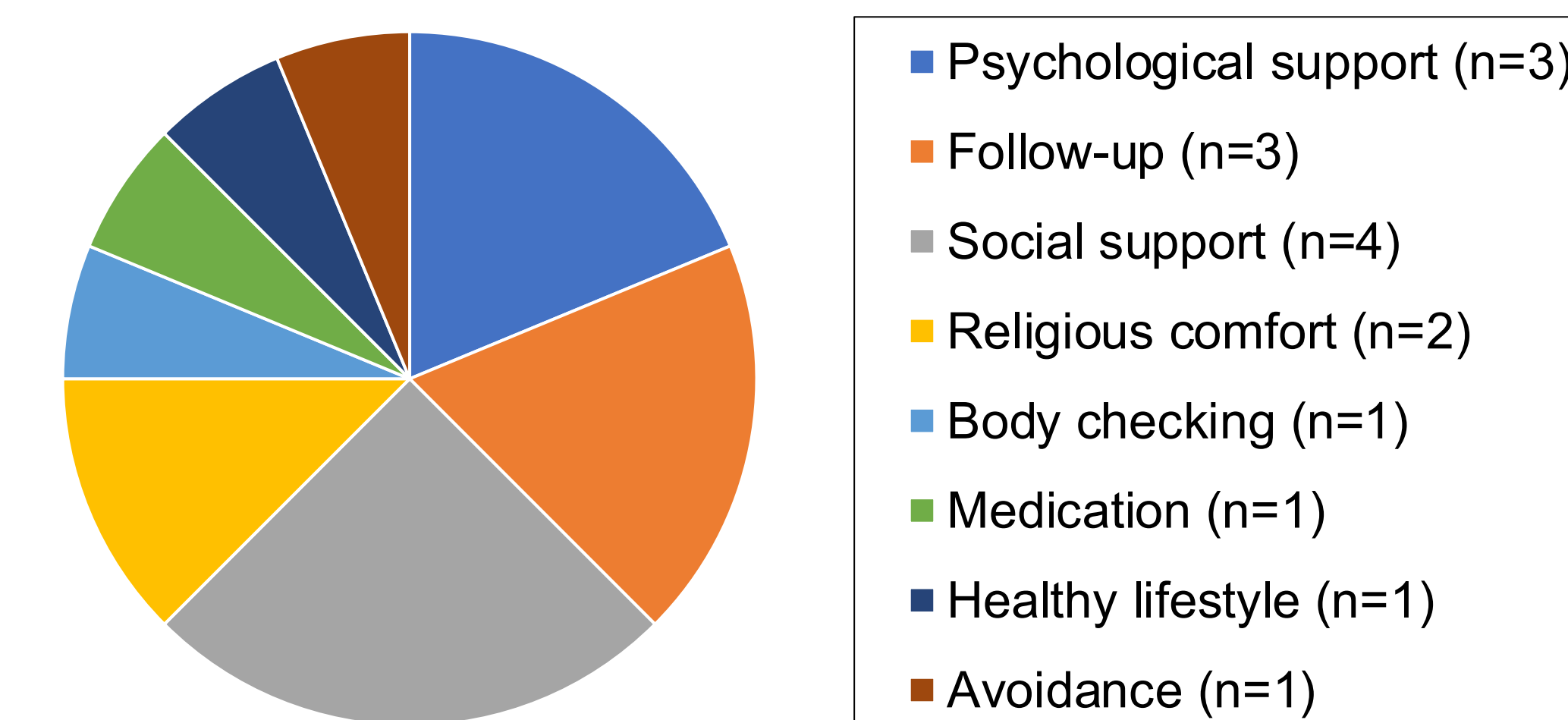
Upon thematic analysis, five broad themes emerged from the literature:

- ❑ *Prevalence and severity of fear of cancer recurrence* highlighted the high prominence of fear of recurrence among gynaecological cancer survivors, consistent with previous reviews and other cancer types.
- ❑ *Determinants of fear of cancer recurrence* indicated the contradicting associations with age, ethnicity and survivorship duration.
- ❑ *Fear of cancer recurrence interventions and coping mechanisms* displayed the positive impact of CBT, mindfulness based psychological support and patient-initiated follow up on levels of fear of recurrence, although evidence was minimal.
- ❑ *Fear of cancer recurrence triggers* comprised mostly of appearance of a new symptom, but also reminders of cancer in media, death and funerals, being alone and family illness. Follow-up appointments was identified as both triggering and reassuring.
- ❑ Finally *psychological reasoning for fear of cancer recurrence* encompassed existential fear of dying, concern over physical functioning, treatment side-effects and expenses of care.

FCR Triggers



FCR Interventions & Coping Mechanisms



References

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Conclusion

Though limited, the evidence suggests that fear of cancer recurrence is a prominent survivorship issue among gynaecological cancer survivors, in which the triggers, coping mechanisms and reasoning behind fear are varied, emphasising the necessity for tailored management for every individual. However, as current studies are contradictory, further large-scale research is required to fully determine the associations between FCR and demographic and medical characteristics. Additionally, the deficient evidence on treatment within this group emphasises the necessity for further interventional studies to determine the most effective method for tackling FCR among gynaecological cancer survivors.