

Recognizing Adolescent and Young Adult Cancer Patient Mental Health: Utilizing the AYA-POST to Improve Distress and Access to Psychosocial Care

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BACKGROUND

- Historically, adolescent and young adult (AYA) cancer patients have suffered from minimal improvements in disparities in access to supportive care. ^{11, 12, 20}
- Distress is a risk factor for noncompliance with treatment and, if left untreated, can progress to treatment indecisiveness, additional clinic and emergency room visits, and poorer quality of life. ¹¹⁻¹²
- Screening is a vital component of psychosocial care and can impact patient outcomes when there are sufficient follow-up referrals and treatment. ¹¹⁻¹²

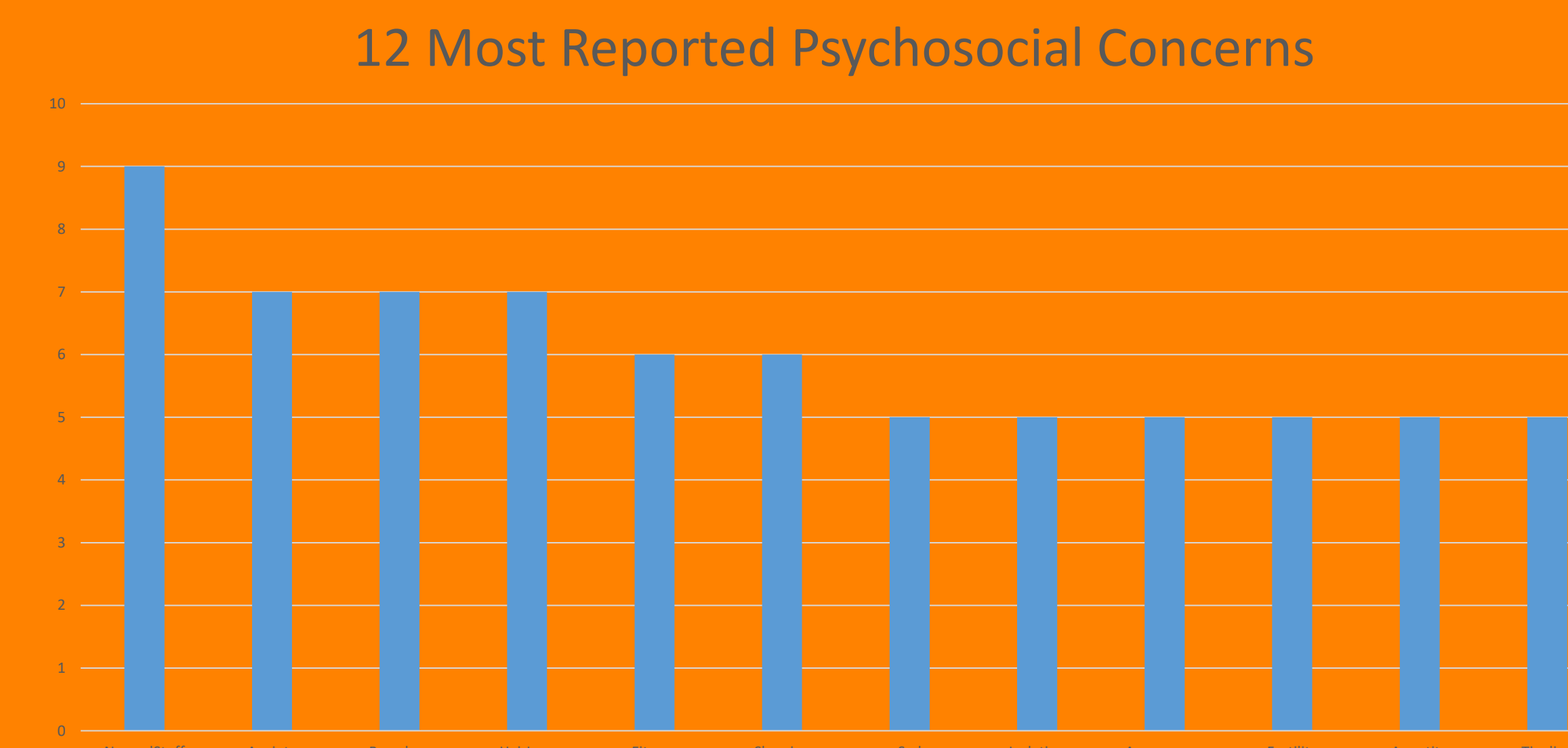
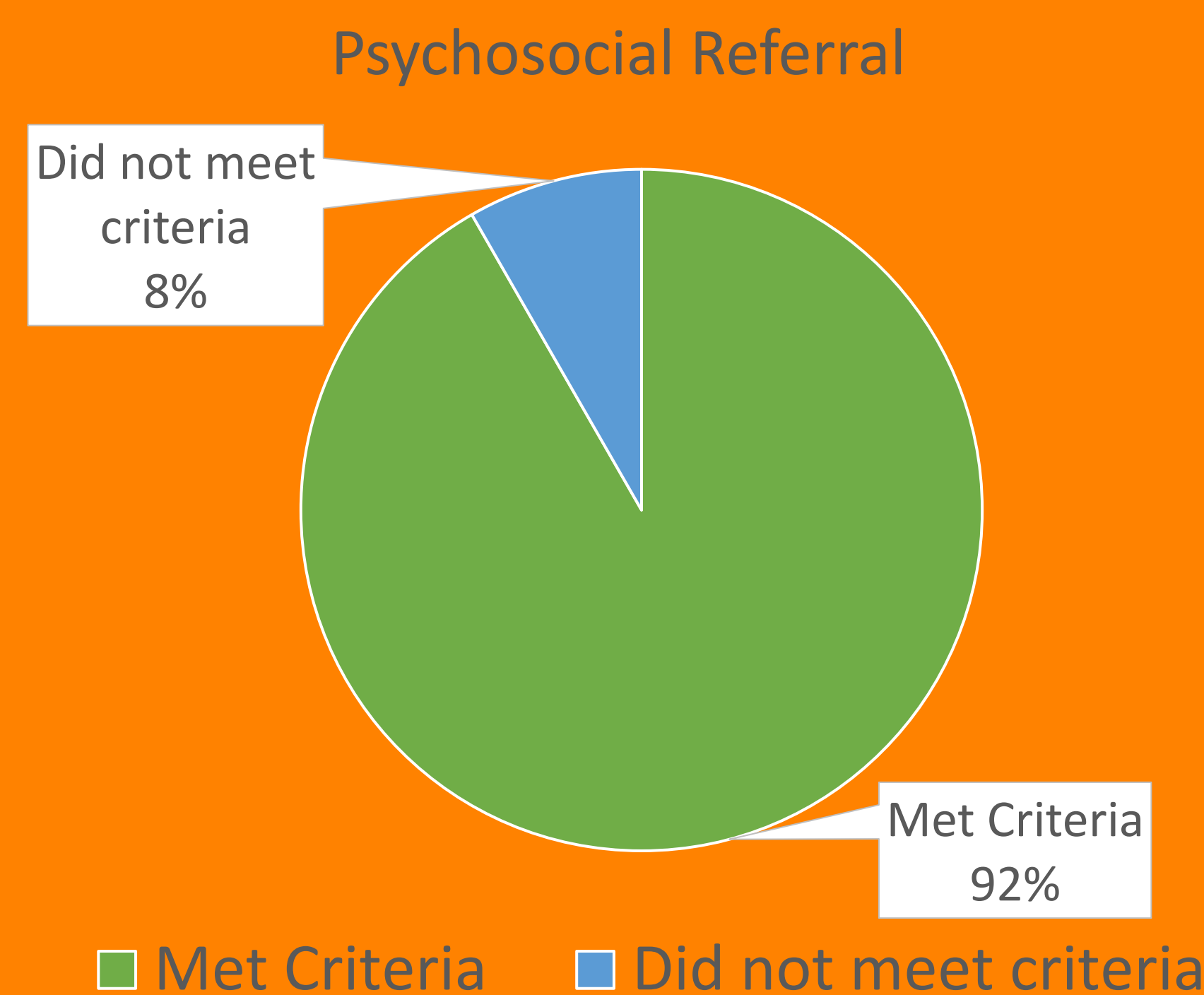
LOCAL PROBLEM

- The site for this practice improvement project is an urban oncology clinic in the southeastern United States.
- Before the implementation of the practice change intervention, there was no standardized process for screening for distress and psychosocial problems.
- The purpose of this project was to implement the use of the Adolescent and Young Adult Psycho-Oncology Screening Tool (AYA-POST) for use during follow-up appointments.
- The aims of the project were to
 - Screen 80% of AYAs at their follow-up appointments
 - Of those who receive a referral, 50% will set up an orientation session at the psychosocial center

METHODS

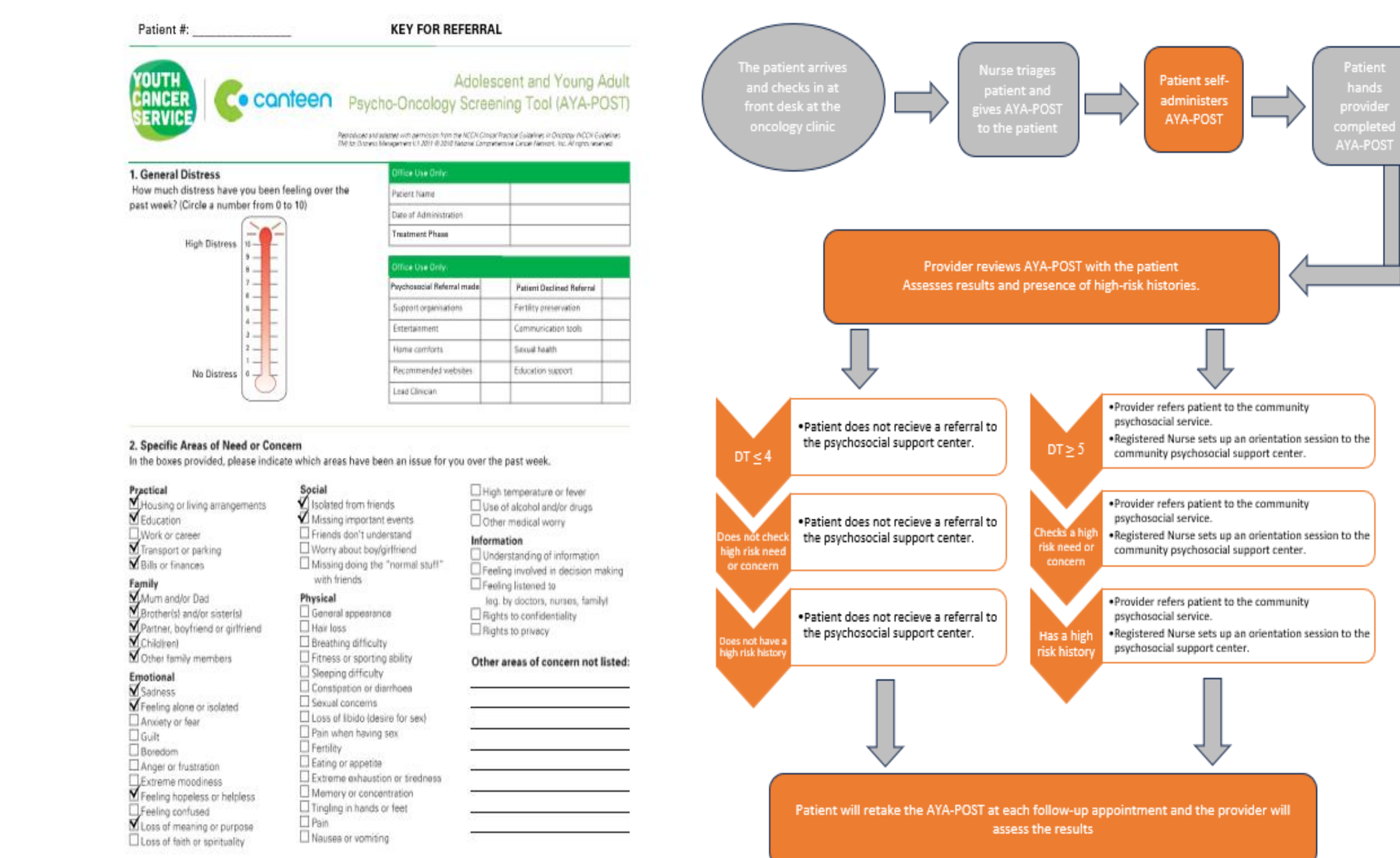
- The John Hopkins Evidence Based Practice model was used as the framework for this project.
- Literature search and critical appraisal demonstrated good evidence to use the AYA-POST (combination of the Distress Thermometer and AYA Needs Assessment). ^{2,3, 9, 10-12, 14-16}
- PDSA (Plan-Do-Study Act) cycles were used to reeducate staff on steps in the implementation process.
- Outcome measures of screening, orientation set-up, and referral rates were measured for a 3-month implementation period.

Implementing the AYA-POST successfully identified **significant distress, high risk histories, and psychosocial concerns, thus increasing access to psychosocial care** for AYA cancer patients.



INTERVENTIONS

- AYAs aged 15-39 years were eligible to be screened with the AYA-POST at their follow-up appointments.
- AYAs with a Distress Thermometer score of ≥ 5 , a high risk history or psychosocial concern were referred to the psychosocial center.



RESULTS

- 100% of appointments that met criteria for a psychosocial referral were set up for an orientation session
- 47.4% of appointments utilized the AYA-POST
- 91.7% of the appointments met criteria for a psychosocial referral

CONCLUSIONS

- Use of the AYA-POST resulted in the identification of distress, high risk histories and psychosocial concerns and increase in access to psychosocial support.
- Practice stakeholders may consider the continuation in clinic and or the expansion of use of the AYA-POST in the myelosuppression unit.
- Identification of distress and psychosocial concerns and referral to psychosocial services has the potential to impact AYAs' health outcomes and quality of life positively.