

# PRIMARY CARE, SURGICAL AND REFERRAL TEAMS' EXPERIENCES WITH REFERRALS TO SURGERY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ALBERTA SURGICAL INITIATIVE: PILOT STUDY

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**CONTEXT:** Many surgical wait times in Alberta exceed clinical recommendations, and are associated with adverse health outcomes and increased healthcare costs. Consequently, the Alberta Surgical (ASI) Initiative is rolling out a province-wide integrated central access model, the Alberta Facilitated Access to Specialized Treatment (FAST) Program, to provide Albertans with quicker access to surgeries.

**OBJECTIVE:** To pilot test a process to generate on-going feedback on experiences with referrals to surgery to share with system stakeholders who are working to advance surgical care.

**DESCRIPTION:** This pilot study was conducted in the Edmonton Zone from May to October 2022. Primary care, surgical and FAST referral teams' experiences with surgical referrals were captured as part of a larger study which includes patients. Participants were recruited through direct emails, institutional mailing lists, and professional social media platforms. We used a mixed-method data collection tool (SenseMaker, Cynefin Co.) co-designed with healthcare providers' input. Entries were anonymous. The tool provides visualizations of the aggregate quantitative and qualitative data, which can be further analyzed to identify emerging thematic patterns.

**OUTCOME MEASURES:** Outcome Measures: Type of surgery, surgical referral experience, emotional tone of experience (negative, positive, neutral), impacts of the experience, participant expectations, potential areas for improvement, and demographics (e.g. healthcare provider role, patient age and gender, geographical location – where will/did the surgery happen?)

**RESULTS:** There were 42 survey entries, with emotional tones of experiences ranging from 62.5% negative, 27.5% positive to 10% neutral. Critical areas of impact in the referral process included communication, efficiency, policy and procedure.



FIG. 1 CRITICAL AREAS OF IMPACT



PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON SURGICAL REFERRALS"  
[qrco.de/referralexperience](https://qrco.de/referralexperience)

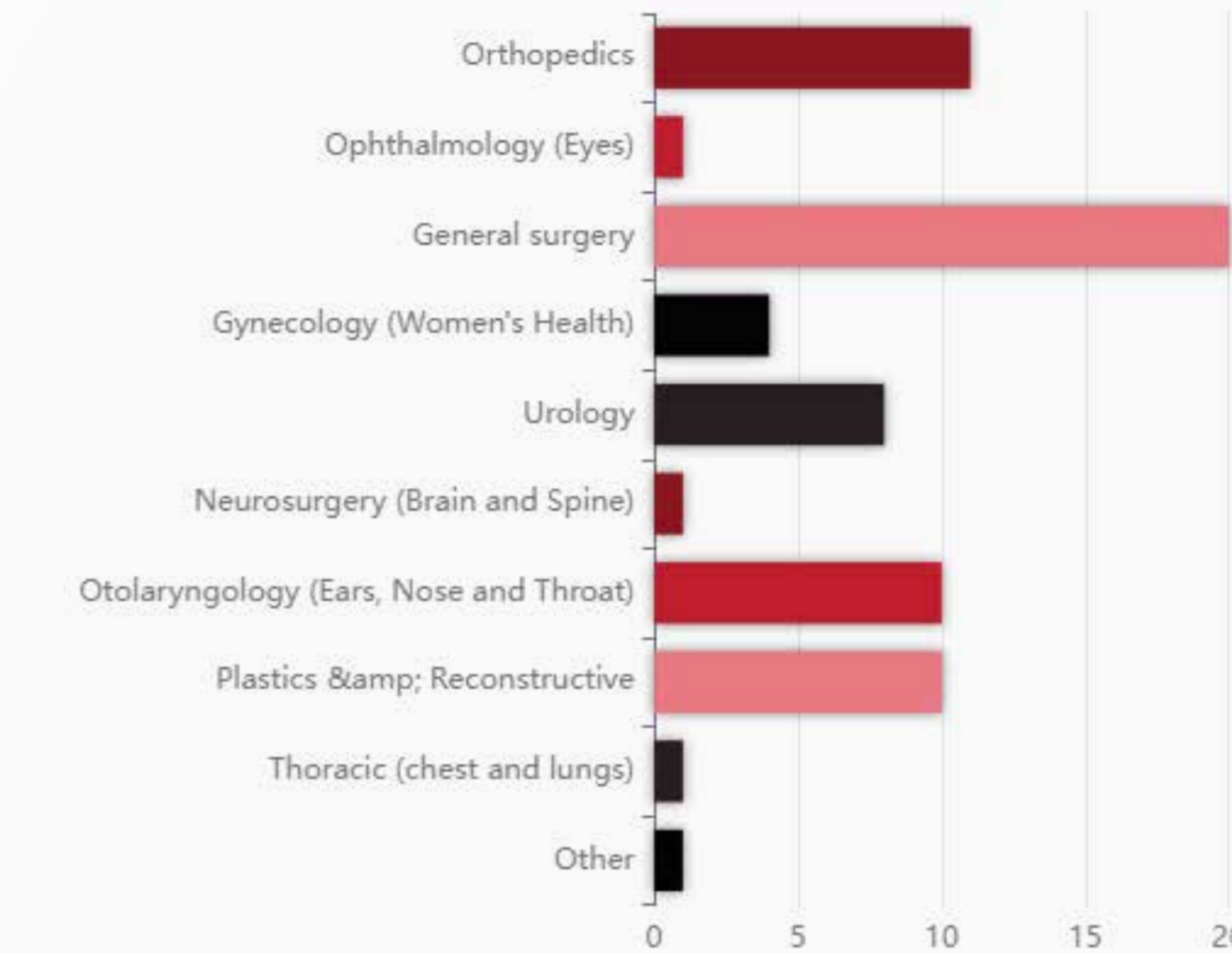


FIG. 2 TYPE OF SURGERY

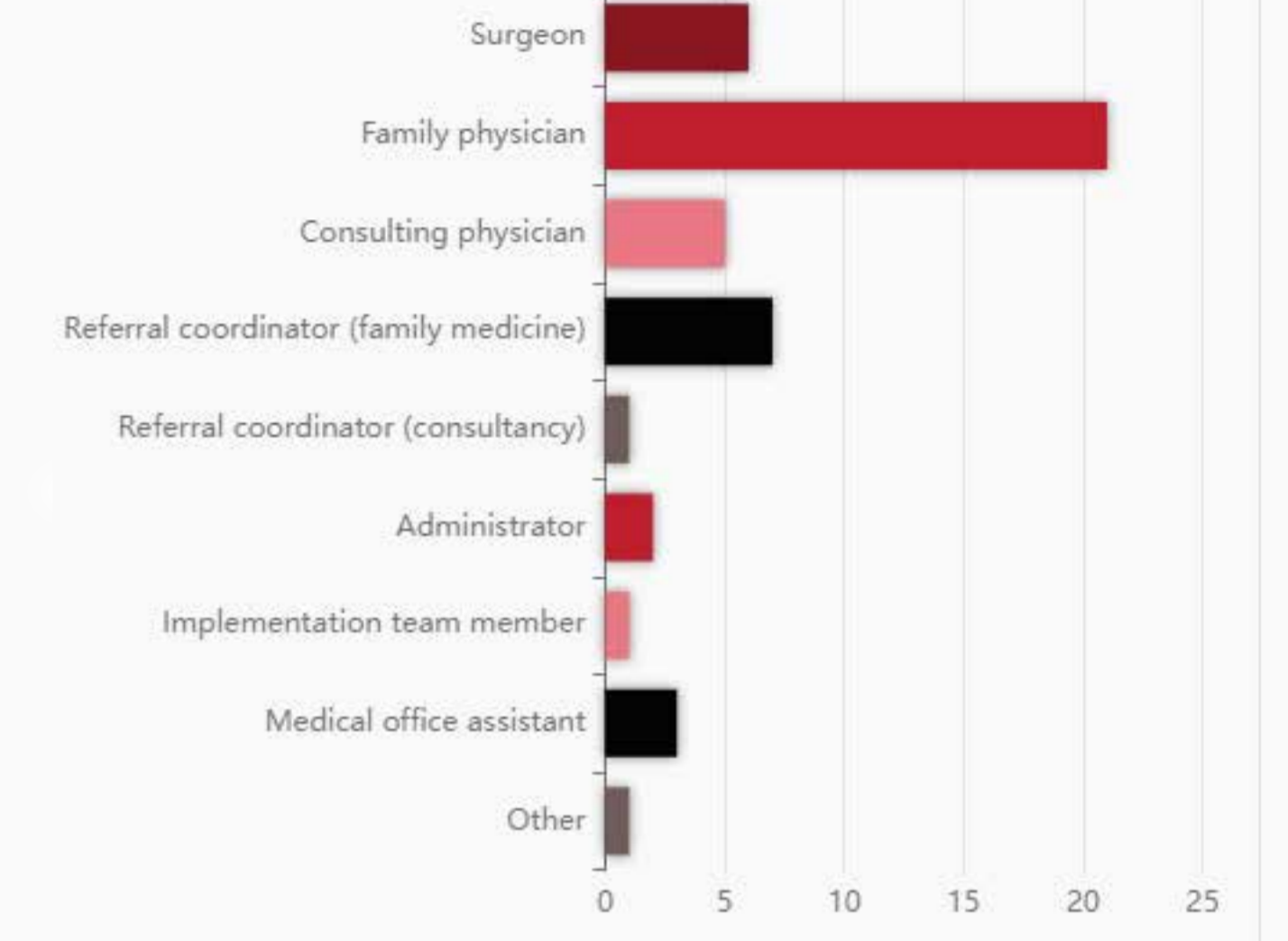


FIG. 3 CATEGORIES OF PARTICIPATING HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

## WHAT WORKED WELL FOR PARTICIPANTS?

- Having a streamlined surgical referral process.

## AREAS OF CONCERN

- Lack of timely, regular and clear communication between providers along the referral pathway.
- Unclear directions for urgent and non-urgent referral processes.
- Duplication of referral process documentation and electronic platform access concerns

## CONCLUSION:

Conclusion: This evaluation process provides important avenues for:

1. patients and families to safely share their surgical referral/journey experiences.
2. healthcare system leaders to gain on-going insights into the realities to motivate actions for healthcare improvement for all Albertans.