

PRIMARY CARE SURVEY RESULTS

JANUARY 2018

Access Improvement Team
Alberta Health Services
January 31, 2018

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary

PURPOSE

The AHS Access Improvement Team aimed to understand the current issues regarding the referral of patients from primary care to specialty clinics. A short survey was developed to collect information from primary care that would help identify those issues and inform the development of electronic solutions, leading to better referral experience and patient safety.

METHOD

The survey was designed for primary care providers (physicians, nurses, referral coordinators, medical office assistants, and clinic managers). The survey was carried out from September 25th to December 29th, 2017. Participants were invited to complete the online survey through Primary Care Network (PCN) newsletters, AHS Primary Health Care Program newsletters and email distribution list. Surveys were also handed out at the Accelerating Primary Care Conference and Family Medicine Showcase. Paper copies were destroyed after recording the responses electronically. All responses were anonymous.

KEY FINDINGS

There were 142 primary care responders during the 3 months with all 5 zones represented. The response rate was 3% given that there are more than 4,800 family physicians in Alberta. Calgary and Edmonton Zones had the most number of responders and South Zone had the least number of responders. There was response from 28 Primary Care Networks (PCNs), with Calgary Foothills and Edmonton North PCNs having the highest number of responders.

The survey demonstrated that the patient referral process was multidisciplinary. A number of clinics indicated that they had a referral coordinating system, and others reported that a nurse, receptionist or medical office assistant may sometimes be involved in the process. Primary Care reported that they encountered challenges when referring patients to certain specialty clinics, particularly, Orthopedics, Psychiatry and Urology, but also to other specialty groups such as Colon and Rectal surgery and Gastroenterology.

Several challenges highlighted during the referral process include, no response or delayed response from clinics regarding referrals, inconsistency of referral requirements and inconsistency of the actual process, for example, where to send referrals. Other challenges encountered include technical difficulties sending referrals such as faxes not going through and referrals declined without alternative management plans for the patients. Common problems reported by patients include long waiting times and late notification/insufficient details regarding the specialist appointment.

LOOKING AHEAD

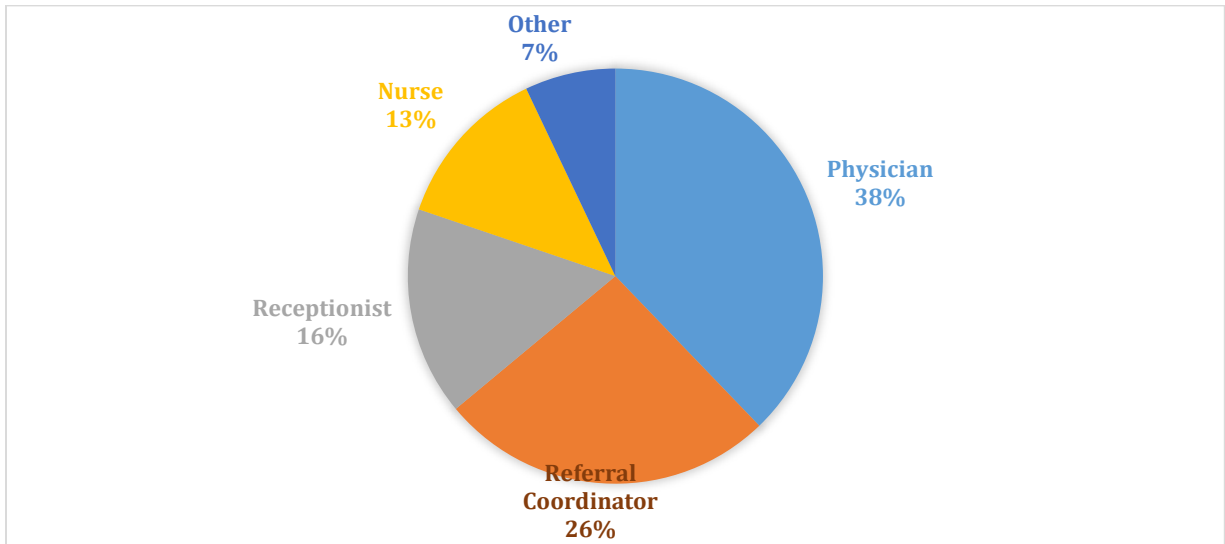
The survey highlights a few challenges within the system and a number of barriers for patients to access specialty services. We know that Alberta's medical community is working hard to improve patient access to care, and the voice from primary care is important to build a stronger medical home for patients. We aim to start the conversations, make the connections and share the resources that can improve Alberta's referral experience. Communication needs to be timely and consistent, please let us know how you would like to stay connected!

SURVEY RESULTS

Survey Results

STAFF INVOLVED IN THE REFERRAL OF PATIENTS IN A PRIMARY CARE CLINIC

- Majority of the referrals are managed by physicians and referral coordinators in the clinic.
- Respondents also indicated that nurses, receptionists and medical office assistants were involved in the referral process.

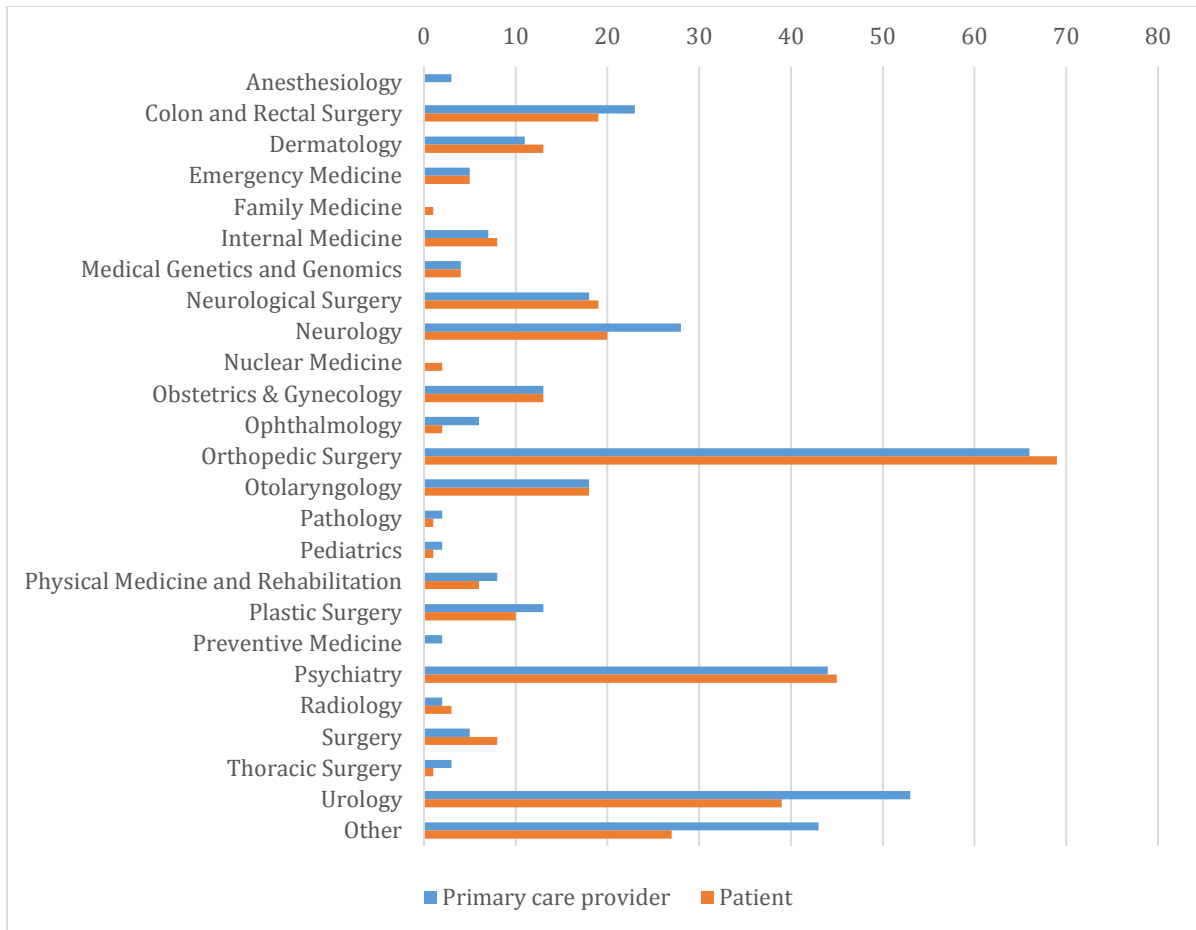


SURVEY RESULTS

TOP 3 MOST CHALLENGING SPECIALTIES

Respondents were asked to identify 3 specialties that they had problems sending their referrals to as well as their patients reported most challenges in two separate questions.

- Three specialties were consistently identified in both questions: Orthopedic Surgery, Urology and Psychiatry.
- Neurology, Colon and Rectal Surgery were also highly mentioned, as well as Gastroenterology under 'Other'.

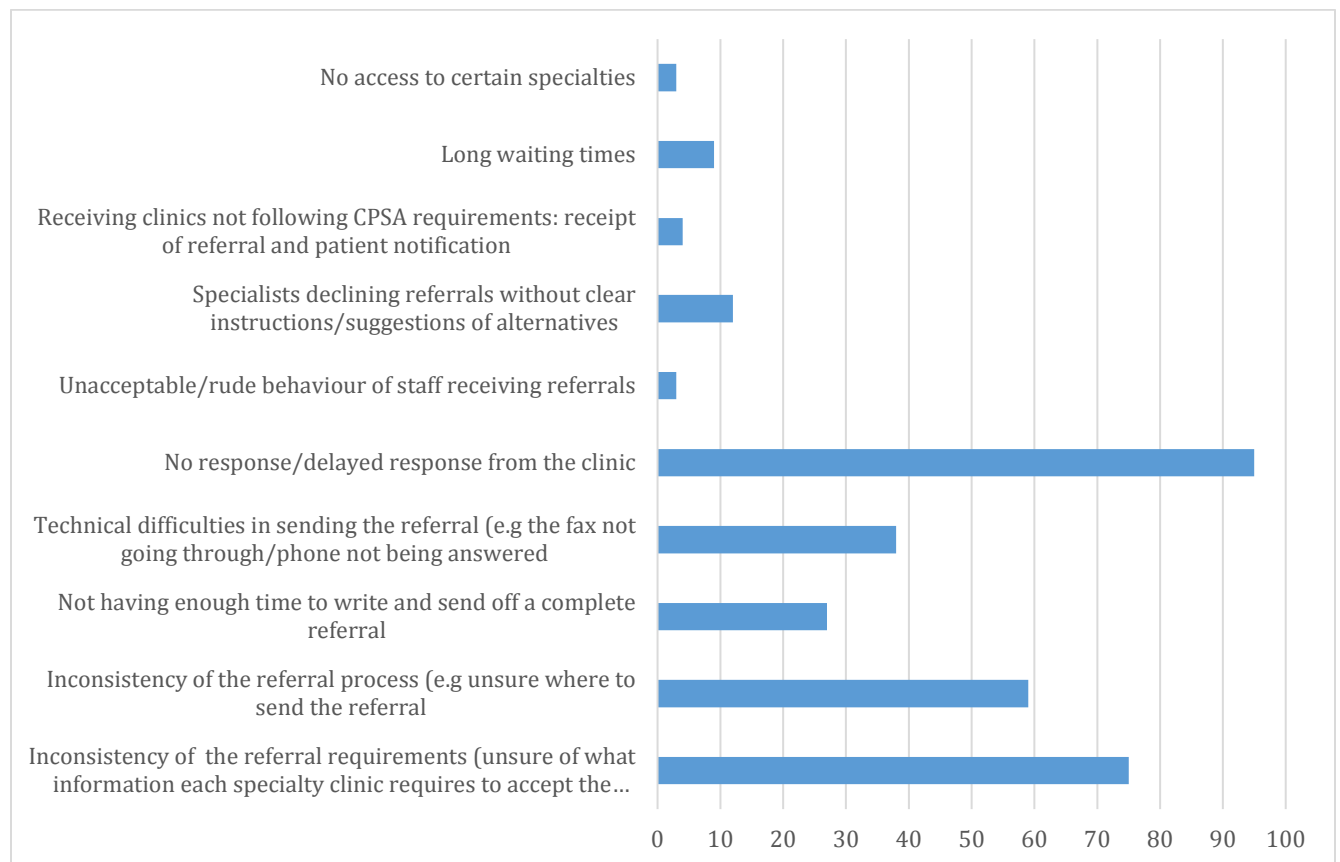


SURVEY RESULTS

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS

Respondents indicated the following 10 key problems when they refer patients to specialty clinics:

- No response/delayed response from the clinic
- Inconsistency of the referral requirements – unsure of what information each specialty clinic requires to accept the patient
- Inconsistency of the referral process
- Technical difficulties in sending the referral such as the fax not going through or the phone not being answered
- Not having enough time to write and send off a complete referral
- No access to certain specialties
- Long waiting times
- Receiving clinics not following CPSA requirements of acknowledgement of referral and notifying the patient of their appointment
- Specialists declining referrals without clear instructions/alternative options for the patient
- Rude and obstructive behavior from staff receiving referrals

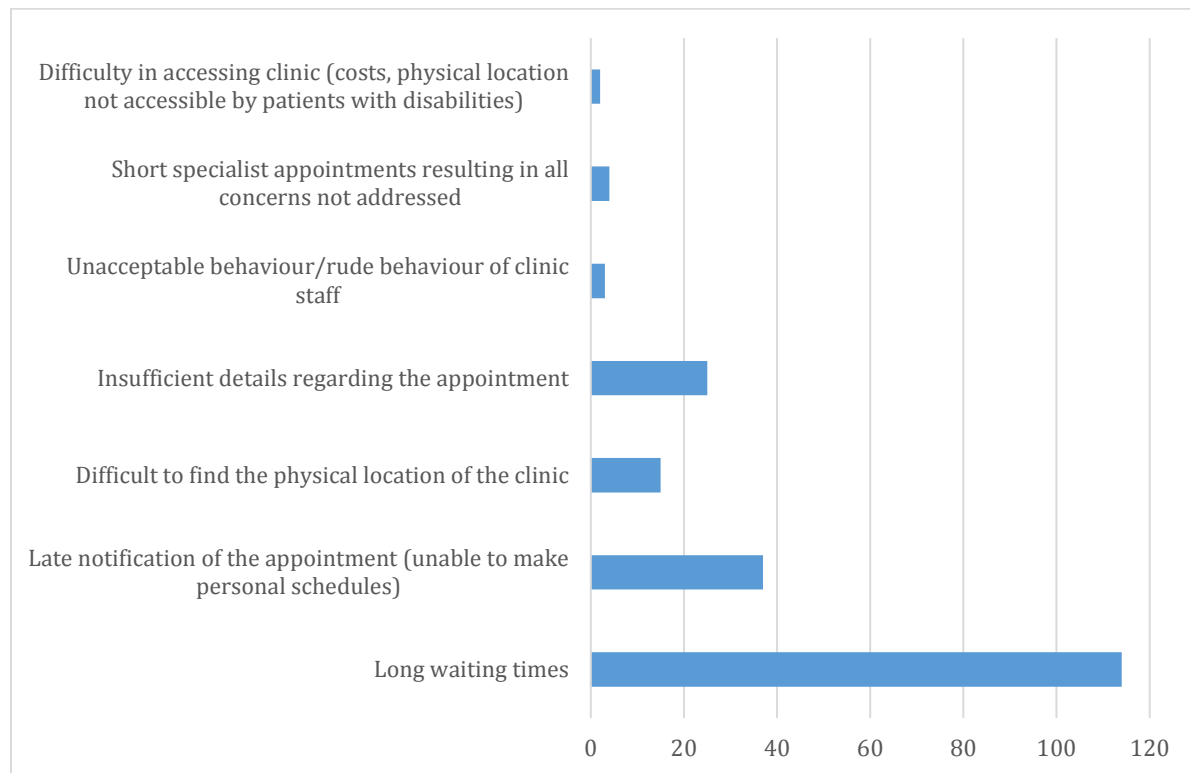


SURVEY RESULTS

PROBLEMS REPORTED BY PATIENTS

Respondents indicated the following common problems reported by their patients:

- Long waiting times
- Late notification of the appointment which may cause challenges for patients to organize their work schedule or other responsibilities
- Insufficient details regarding the appointment
- Difficulties in finding the physical location of the specialty clinic
- Short specialist appointments resulting in all concerns not addressed
- Unacceptable behavior experienced by patients while in specialist clinics (rude, abrupt, disrespectful)
- Difficulty in accessing clinic (costs of travel to clinic, location of clinic not accessible by people with disabilities)

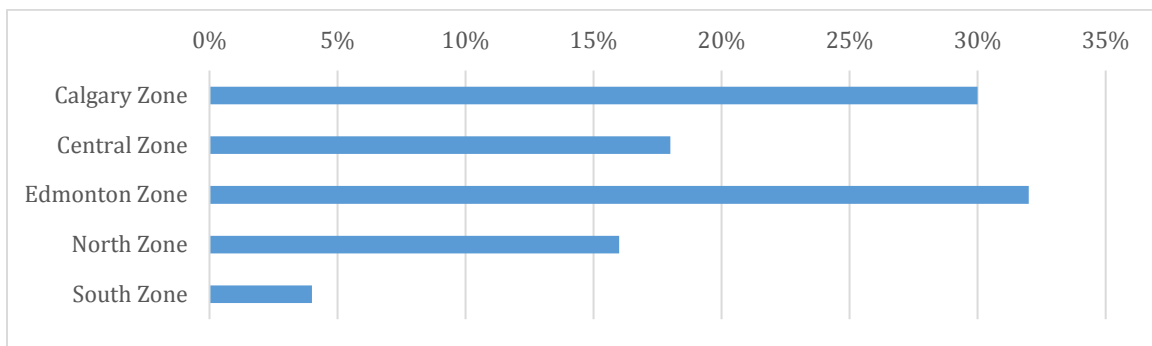


PROFILE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Profile of Survey Respondents

Out of 142 responses, the majority (62%) received from Calgary and Edmonton Zones. Over 91% of the respondents indicated their clinics affiliated with Primary Care Network (PCN).

RESPONSES RECEIVED IN EACH ZONE



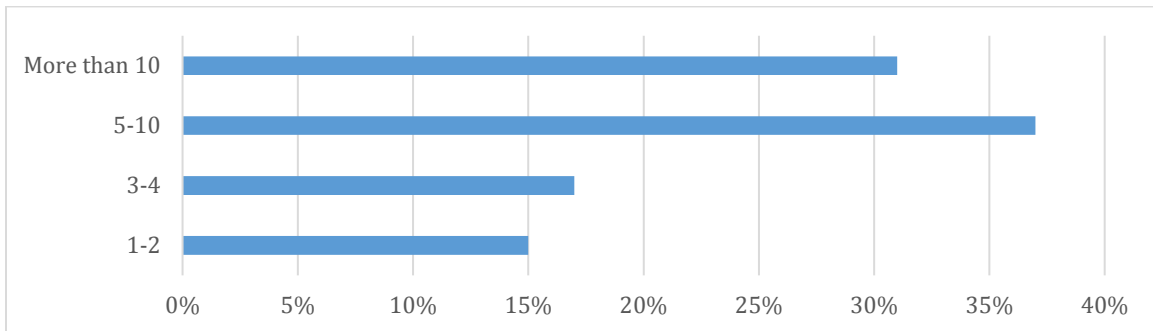
RESPONSES RECEIVED IN EACH PCN

	NAME OF PCN	#		NAME OF PCN	#
Calgary Zone	Bow Valley PCN	0	Edmonton Zone	Alberta Heartland PCN	1
	Calgary Foothills PCN	25		Edmonton North PCN	14
	Calgary Rural PCN	0		Edmonton Oliver PCN	3
	Calgary West Central PCN	3		Edmonton Southside PCN	10
	Highland PCN	0		Edmonton West PCN	3
	Mosaic PCN	3		Leduc Beaumont Devon PCN	1
	South Calgary PCN	3		Sherwood Park Strathcona County PCN	6
Central Zone	Big Country PCN	8	North Zone	St Albert and Sturgeon PCN	5
	Camrose PCN	2		WestView PCN	0
	Drayton Valley PCN	2		Aspen PCN	1
	Kalyna Country PCN	3		Bighorn PCN	1
	Lloydminster PCN	2		Bonnyville PCN	0
	Peaks to Prairies PCN	1		Cold Lake PCN	1
	Provost PCN	0		Grande Prairie PCN	2
	Red Deer PCN	0		Lakeland PCN	0
	Rocky Mountain House PCN	2		McLeod PCN	0
	Wainwright PCN	0		Northwest PCN	0
	Wetaskiwin PCN	1		Peace Region PCN	0
	Wolf Creek PCN	2		Sexsmith Spirit River PCN	1
			West Peace PCN	2	
			Wood Buffalo PCN	0	
			South Zone	Chinook PCN	5
				Palliser PCN	0

PROFILE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

NUMBER OF PHYSICIANS IN A CLINIC

- 37% of the survey respondents indicated their clinics have 5-10 physicians while 31% have more than 10 physicians.



CONTACT INFORMATION

For any questions related to this survey report or our work in improving access to specialty care, please contact:

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