

The Specific Timely Appointments for Triage Model in Telehealth Psychotherapy

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Problem Statement

- Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a consistent wait list of new patients requesting an appointment at an outpatient telehealth psychotherapy clinic, with patients waiting an average of five weeks to see a provider.
- With many outpatient practices choosing to use waitlists, the delay in care continues to be a national healthcare issue.
- Setting: An outpatient telehealth psychotherapy clinic
- Population: New psychotherapy patients including children, adolescents, and adults requesting therapy and/or medication management services for the first time

Project Purpose & Goals

- Purpose Statement: The purpose of this quality improvement initiative was to reduce the time it takes new patients requesting appointments to be scheduled, from five to two weeks.
- Process Goal:
 - All interns at the clinic will implement previously learned Statistic Timely Appointments for Triage model concepts to schedule new patient appointments during every call-back encounter.
- Outcome Goal:
 - All patients that inquire about an appointment at the clinic will have secured an appointment with the clinic within two weeks of their initial inquiry.

Methods

Setting: An outpatient fully remote telehealth psychotherapy clinic

Population: Children, adolescents, and adults seeking psychotherapy and/or medication management for the first time

Implementation Strategies and Measures: Implementation occurred over a 15-week period in Fall 2023.

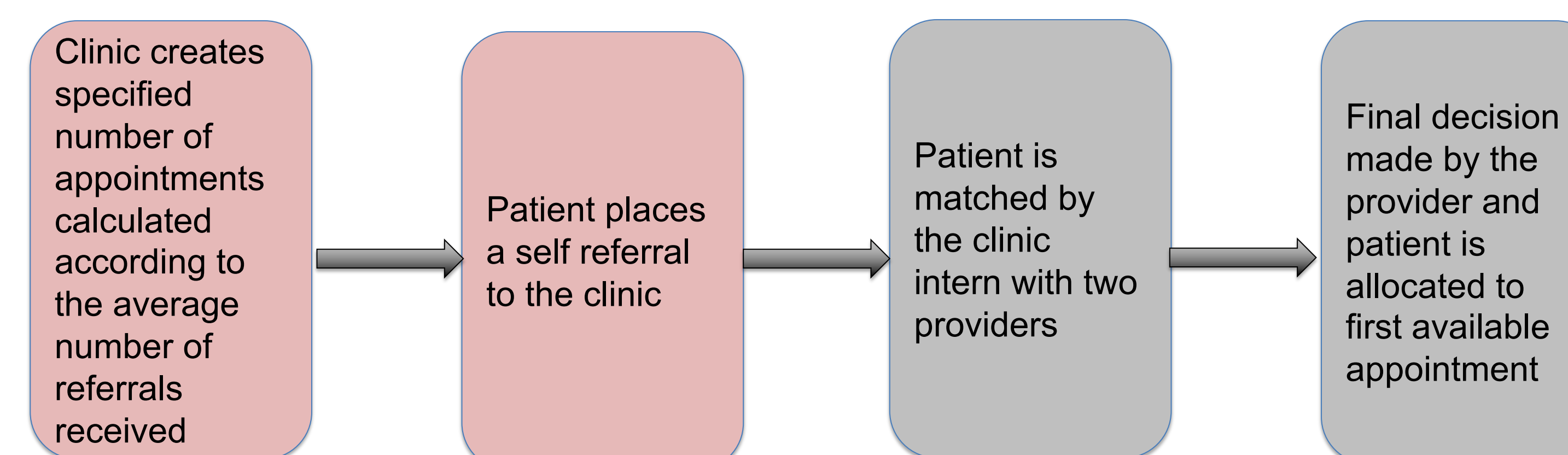
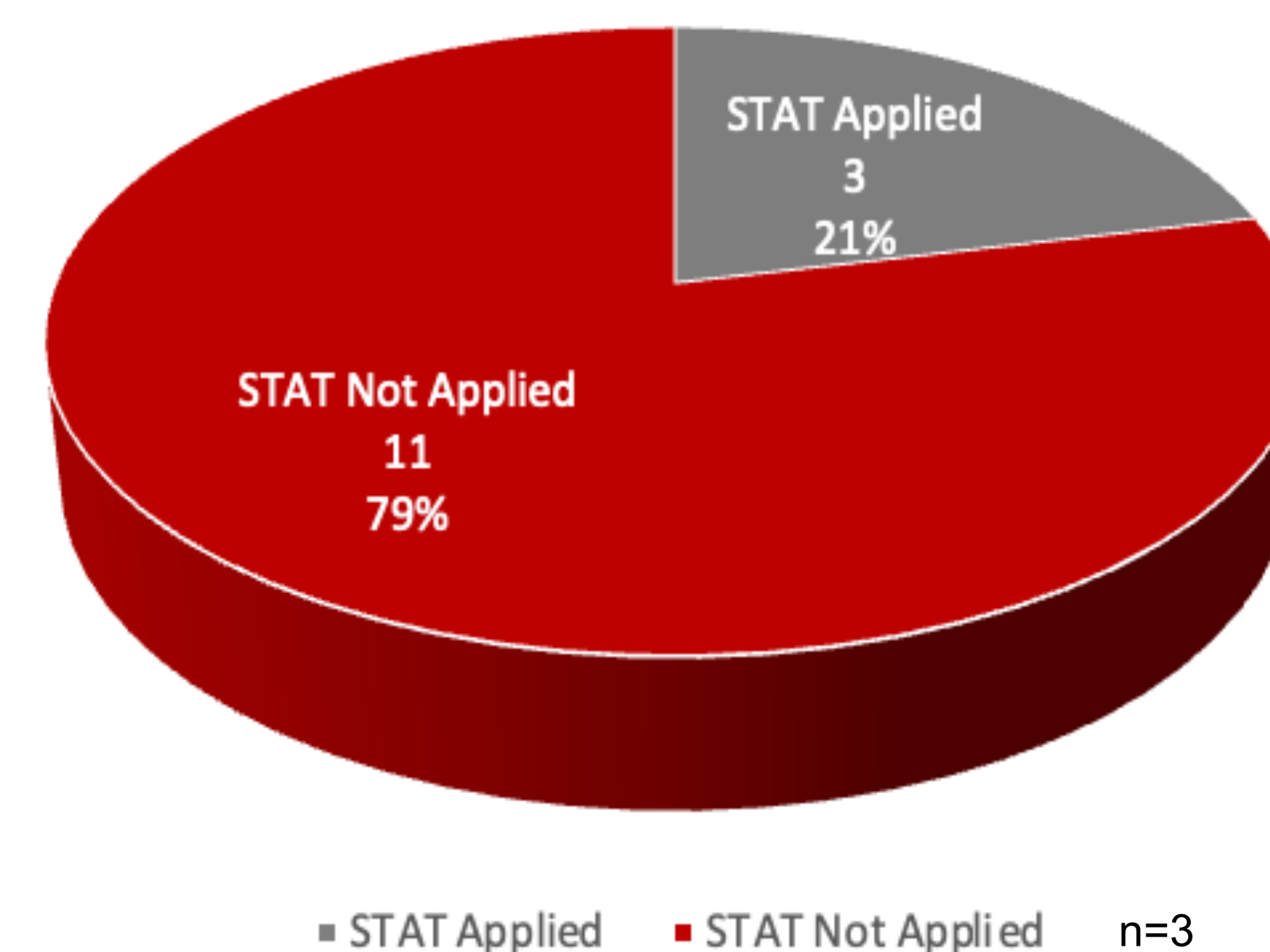
- Staff education on the STAT model and therapeutic call-back techniques
- Development of "Request Appointment" link located on clinic's website
- Completion of student intern readiness survey and provider preferences document
- Data collection via Appointment Chart Audit REDCap tool
- Weekly meetings with student intern, owner of clinic, and front desk staff
- Weekly chart audit to determine number of days to patient's first appointment

Discussion

- Of the 14 total patients who received a call-back using STAT model concepts, 3 patients were successfully scheduled within four weeks of call-back. Various contextual barriers, including limited staff availability and subpar timing in communication, inhibited project success.
- It took as little as 3 days and as many as 28 days to have the patient scheduled for their first appointment once a call-back was completed.
- Two STAT model concepts were incorporated which helped the clinic redesign their clinic structure, reduce their wait time, and rely less on waitlists.
- The literature highlights support of the STAT model in improving timely access to care in qualitative ways also found during this project's implementation.
- Studies have found a reduction in wait time to first appointment and found patient's quality of life, satisfaction, and psychological symptoms were positively influenced by shorter wait times.

Results

First Appointment within Four Weeks of Call-Back



Components of the STAT model

Conclusions

Conclusion

- Redesigning service interventions through eliminating wait lists and by planning for future appointments using STAT model concepts may help outpatient clinics keep up with the demand for their services.

Limitations

- Limited staff availability and inconsistent communication due to nature of virtual clinic setting
- Small sample size and limited number of staff available
- Only one clinic intern was available to complete call-backs

Recommendations

- It would be beneficial to establish at least one individual to take on daily oversight of call-backs and appointment tracking in the electronic health record.

References & Acknowledgements

