

### Problem & PURPOSE

- Anxiety and depression are common following cardiac surgery
- Emotional distress contributes to delayed recovery, increased pain, reduced participation in rehabilitation, and higher readmission rates.
- Routine psychosocial screening is not consistently integrated into inpatient cardiac care.

Evaluate the feasibility of implementing a standardized paper-based psychosocial screening and referral process using the PHQ-9 and GAD-7 for adult post-operative cardiac surgery patients.

### Available Knowledge & Rationale

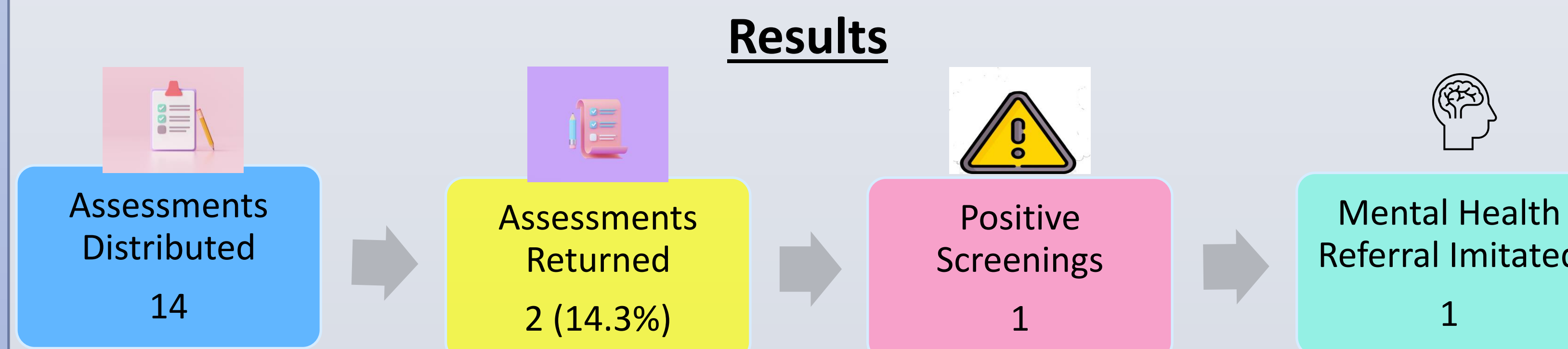
- ✓ Anxiety and depression negatively affect recovery from surgery
- ✓ Early identification improves holistic care
- ✓ PHQ-9 and GAD-7 are validated screening tools
- ✓ Structured referral pathways improve access to mental health services

### Methods

- Context
  - Large midwestern academic medical center
  - Heart & Vascular Unit
  - Four-week quality improvement pilot
  - Adult post-operative cardiac surgery patients
- Intervention
  - Eligible patients were given the PHQ-9 & GAD-7 assessments
  - Nurses scored the assessments
  - Scores  $\geq 10$  were referred to mental health
- Study of the Intervention
  - Four-week pilot evaluated feasibility of integrating paper-based psychosocial screening into routine post-operative cardiac care
  - Assessed participation rates, workflow integration, referrals, and implementation barriers using screening logs and staff feedback.
- Measure
  - Process Measures
    - Number of assessments distributed
    - Number of assessments returned
    - Positive screenings
    - Mental Health referrals

### Data Analysis

- Data was entered into a password-protected Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet
- Descriptive Statistics summarized screening participation and referrals
- Frequencies and percentages were calculated for assessments distributed, completed assessments, positive screenings, and referrals.
- Screening logs and completed assessments were reviewed for accuracy and completeness.
- Informal staff feedback was analyzed to identify workflow barriers and implementation challenges.



During the four-week pilot period, 14 eligible post-operative cardiac surgery patients were given the PHQ-9 and GAD-7 assessments. Two patients completed the screenings which equates to a 14.3% participation rate. Of those two assessments, one patient screened positive for moderate anxiety and depression and was therefore referred to mental health services. Although participation was lower than anticipated, the pilot successfully identified a patient who may have gone without the additional psychosocial support during the post-operative recovery period in the hospital.

### Discussion

### Interpretation

- ❖ Psychosocial screening CAN be incorporated into inpatient cardiac surgery care
- ❖ Evidence alone is insufficient without workflow integration
- ❖ Organizational and staff support are vital for successful implementation
- ❖ The intervention increased staff awareness of psychosocial recovery, even with limited participation

### Implementation Barriers

- Leadership transition during pilot
- Patient fatigue during recovery
- Limited HVU bed availability
- Paper-based screening workflow
- Competing clinical priorities

### Conclusion

### Key Takeaways

- \* Standardized psychosocial screening is feasible in the acute cardiac surgery care setting
- \* Workflow integration is essential for long-term sustainability
- \* EHR integration could improve completion rates
- \* Continued support from leadership and staff education are necessary
- \* Future projects should include extended implementation periods and expansion to additional cardiac units (ex: CVICU)

### Lessons Learned

1. Evidence-based interventions require thoughtful implementation planning.
2. Leadership engagement directly influences project success
3. Small pilot projects can identify important workflow barriers before broader implementation
4. Quality improvement is an iterative process that informs future practice change..

### Clinical Implications

- Improves recognition of anxiety and depression following cardiac surgery
- Promotes holistic, patient-centered recovery
- Encourages earlier referral to mental health when indicated
- Supports interdisciplinary collaboration among nursing, providers, case management, and behavioral health

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