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The Impact of a Nurse Navigator in Developing a Head and Neck Cancer Program

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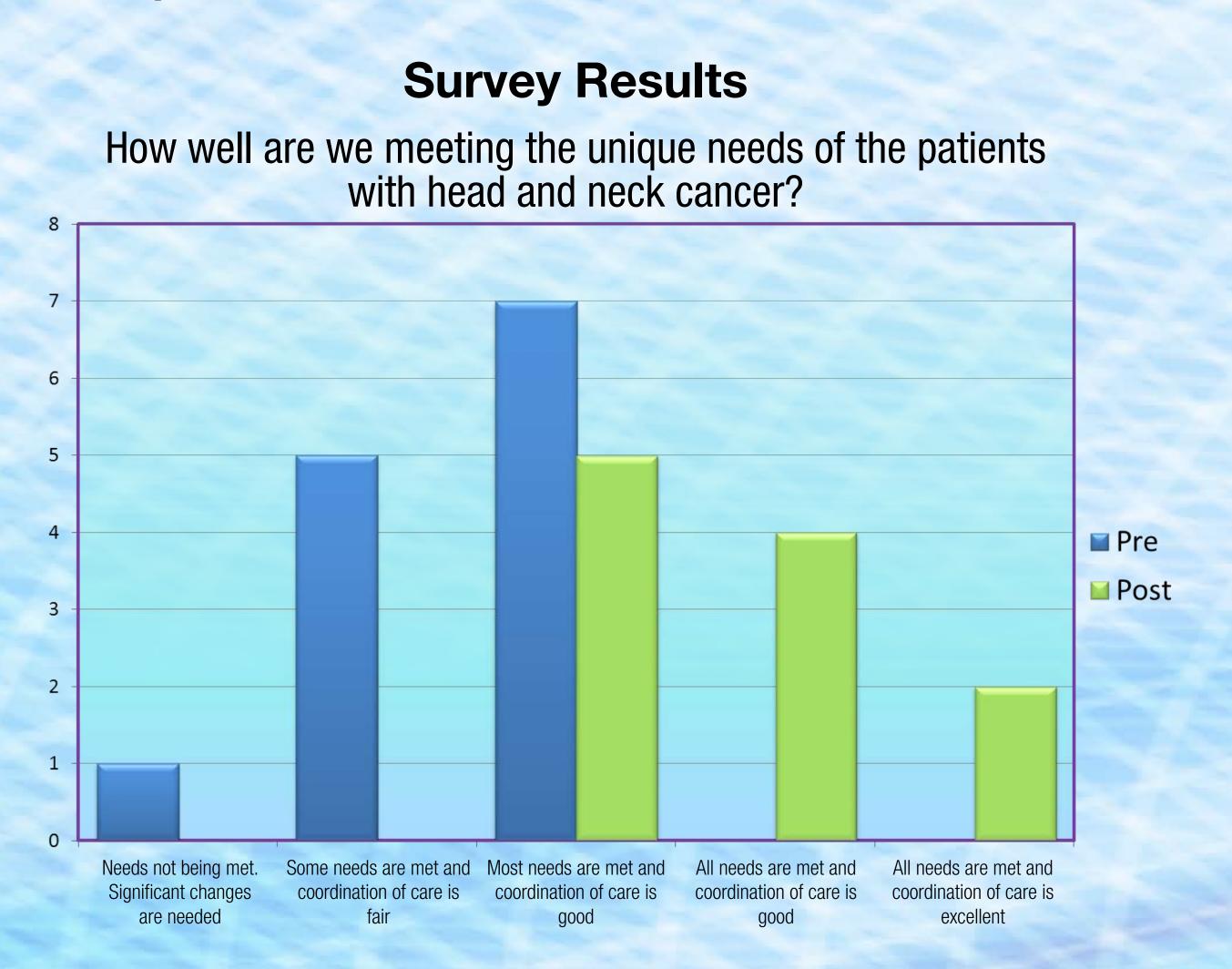
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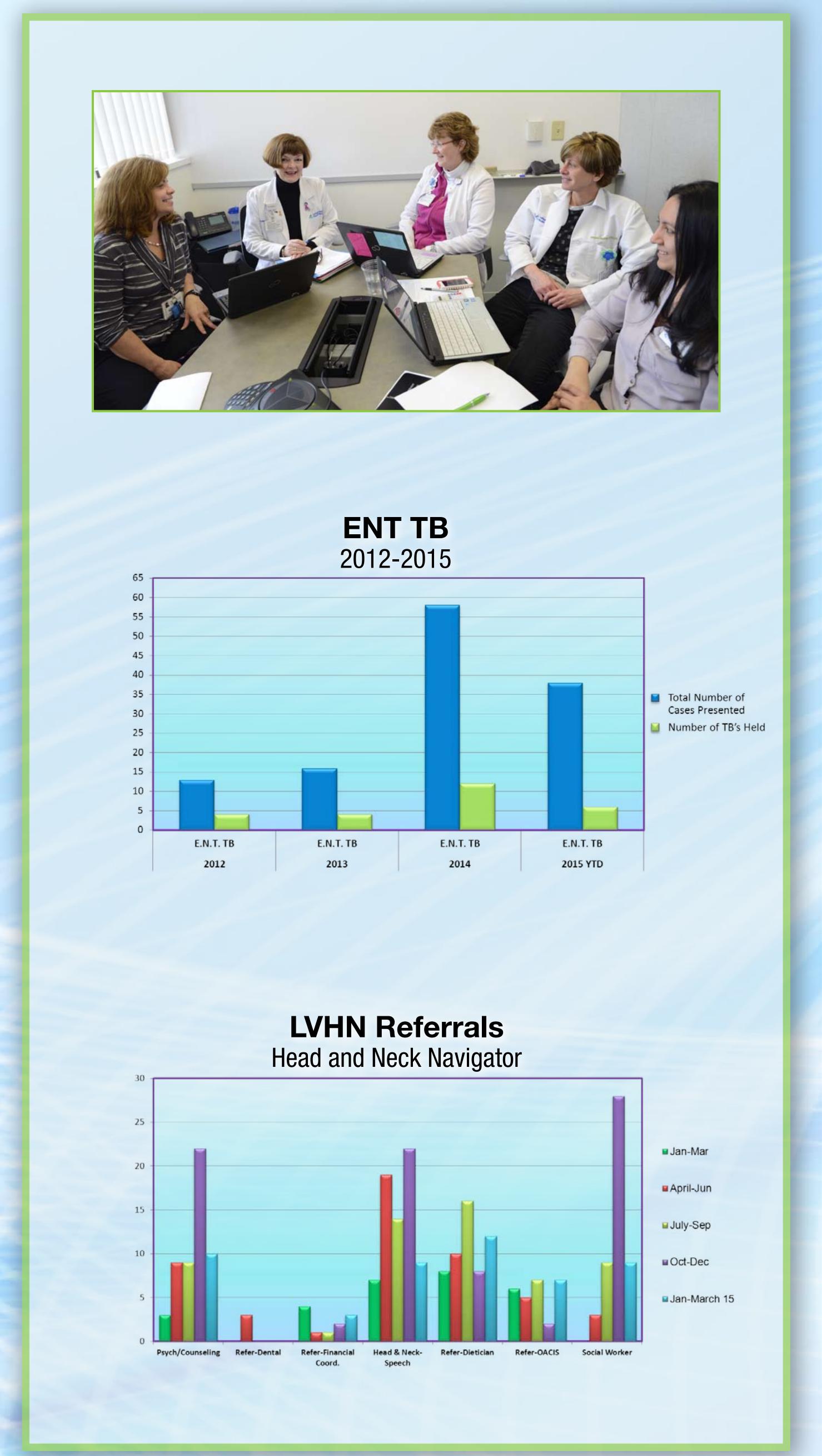
Background

A survey of staff and providers showed that patients with head and neck cancer were a priority for navigation, their needs were not met, and the care coordination was fair to poor. The head and neck Nurse Navigator used the survey results to identify gaps in service and care to prioritize the needs of this population.

Objectives

- Remove barriers to care
- Improve communication and collaboration among team members
- Increase referrals to support services
- Increase awareness in the community with oral screenings and participation in the Oral Cancer Foundation annual walk
- Measure patient satisfaction





Methods

- Navigator organized a multidisciplinary case conference, members include:
 - Speech therapist, social worker, dietitian, radiation and oncology nurses, counselor, bilingual nurse navigator.
- The Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) Tumor Board increased from quarterly to monthly.
- Navigator facilitates referrals and provides ongoing support to patients including being present at their single point of access visit (radiation and medical oncology same day consults).
- The navigator, outreach coordinator, and dental clinic staff collaborated to plan and execute an oral screening event, which is now annual.

Results

- A post-implementation survey showed an increase in scores for "needs of head and neck patients being met" and for "coordination of care."
- The number of patients diagnosed with malignancies presented at ENT Tumor Board increased from 16 to 58 annually.
- Eleven patients were seen in single point of access visits between January and May 2015. Referrals to support services increased from 134 from July to September 2013 to 268 from January to March 2014.
- Three oral screening events have been held. The total number of patients screened were 111, and 13 were referred for further care.
- Patient satisfaction scores are high, with positive comments.

Conclusion

The Navigator drives the success of a head and neck cancer program as evidenced by improved coordination of care, increased multidisciplinary collaboration, and high patient satisfaction.

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