

Initiatives to Improve the Timeliness of Cancer Diagnosis: Results From an Environmental Scan

Michelle Pollock, PhD

Rodger Craig, MPH

Dagmara Chojecki, MLIS

Bing Guo, MD, MSc

CADTH Symposium

April 16, 2019



INSTITUTE OF
HEALTH ECONOMICS
ALBERTA CANADA

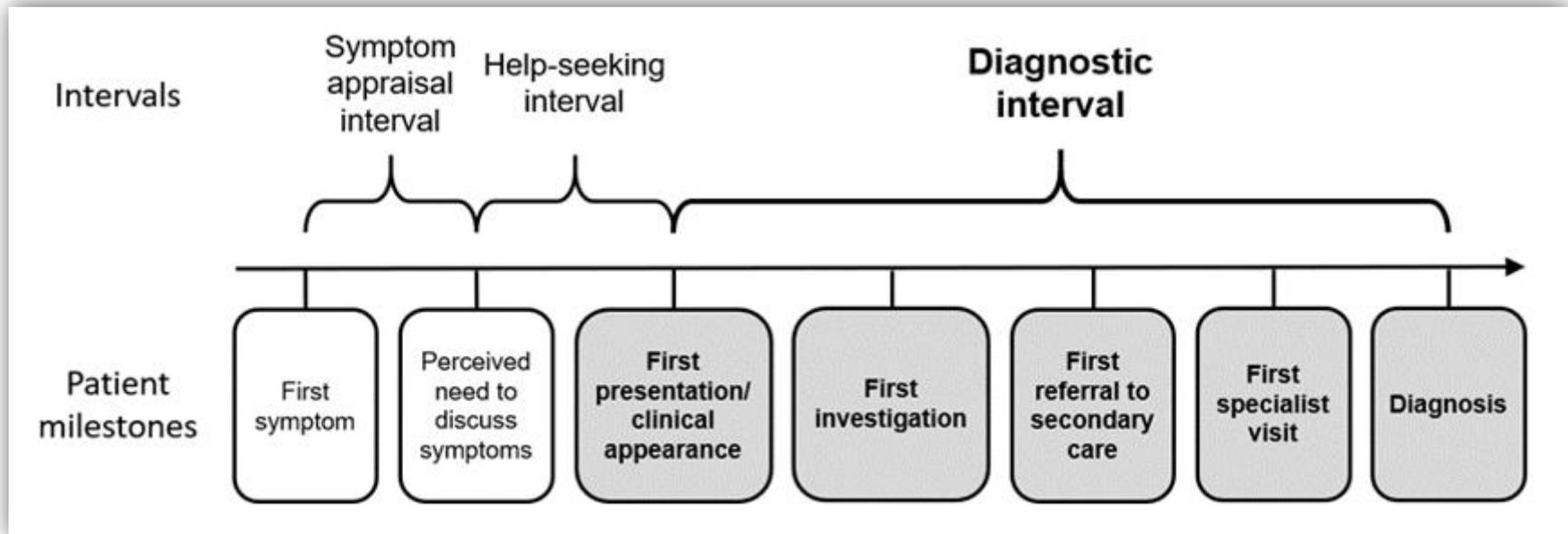
Disclosure

I have no actual or potential conflict of interest in relation to this topic or presentation.

The request for this project came from the Cancer Strategic Clinical Network (Alberta Health Services).

The pathway to cancer diagnosis

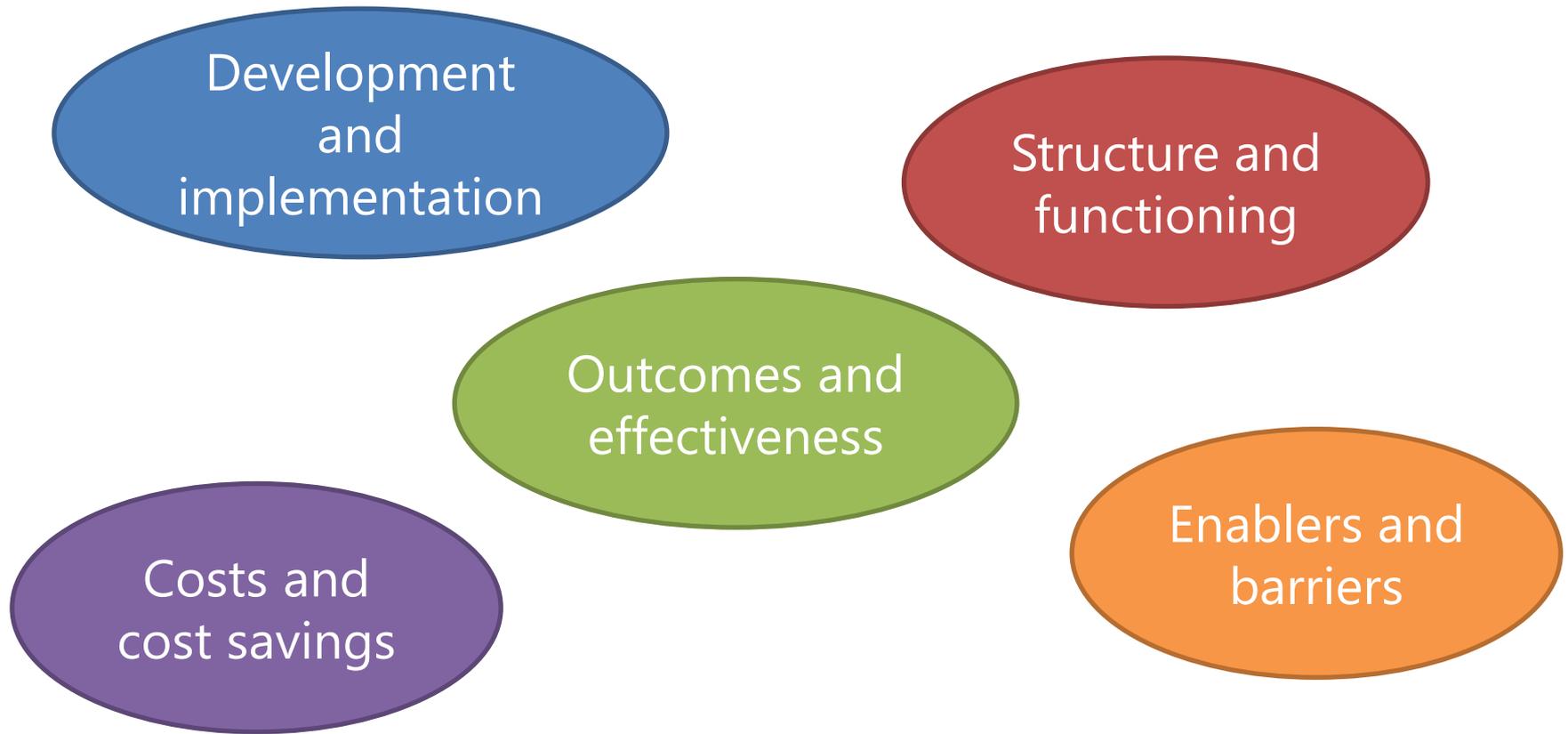
- Alberta has long and variable wait times to diagnosis, and lower survival, than some Canadian provinces.
- Conventional wisdom suggests that accelerating the speed of cancer diagnosis should improve health outcomes



The project request

- Since 2000, several Canadian and international jurisdictions have aimed to improve the timeliness of cancer diagnosis by **integrating and coordinating services across multiple components of the diagnostic interval.**
- Alberta lacks a comprehensive and coordinated provincial strategy for accelerating cancer diagnosis.
- First step was to learn what other jurisdictions have done and see how those learnings might translate to Alberta.

“What programs currently exist, and what are they like?”



Project time frame: 5 months

Methods

We conducted a two-part environmental scan:



Literature
review

(89 documents)



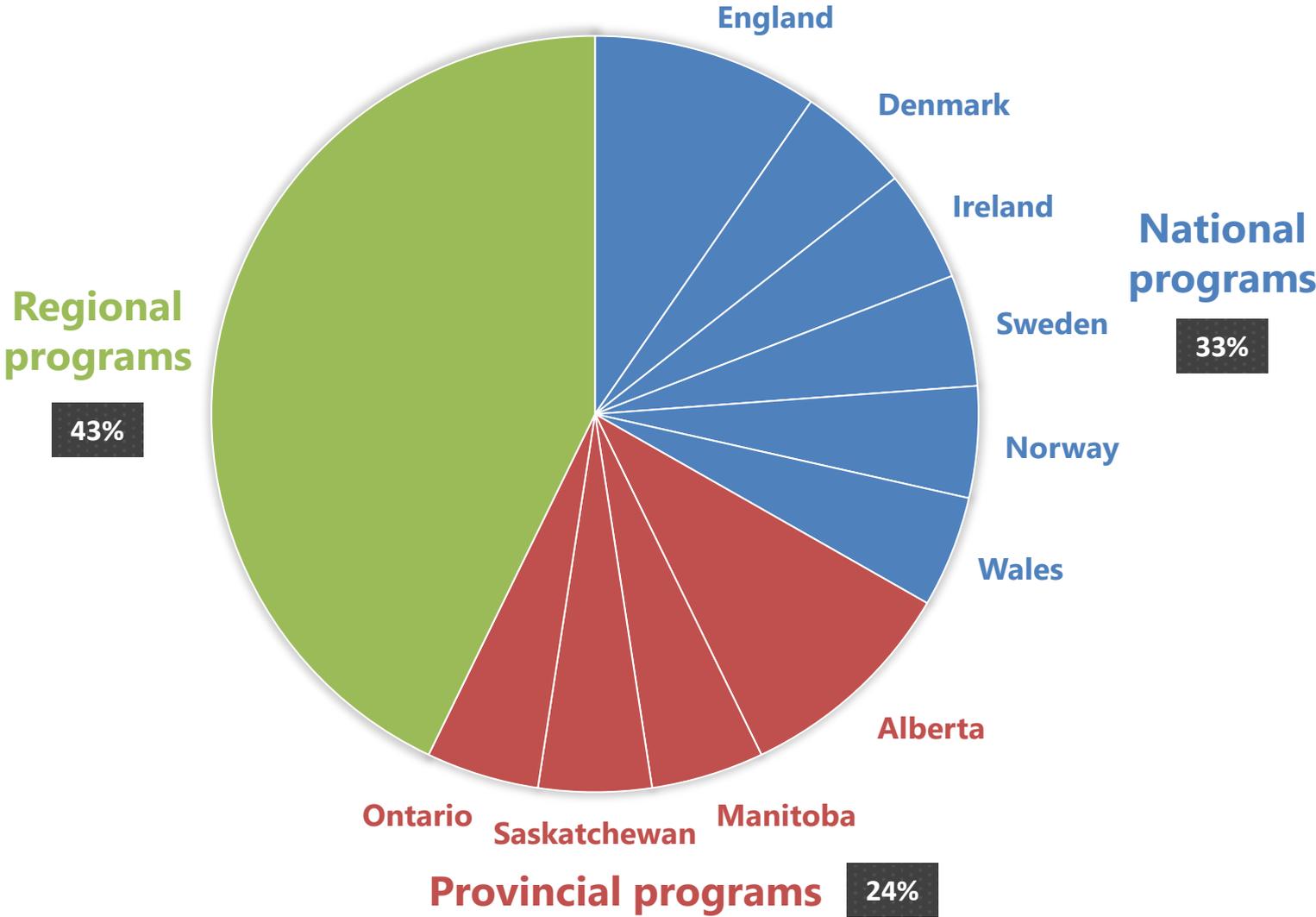
Key
informant
consultations

(20 key informants)

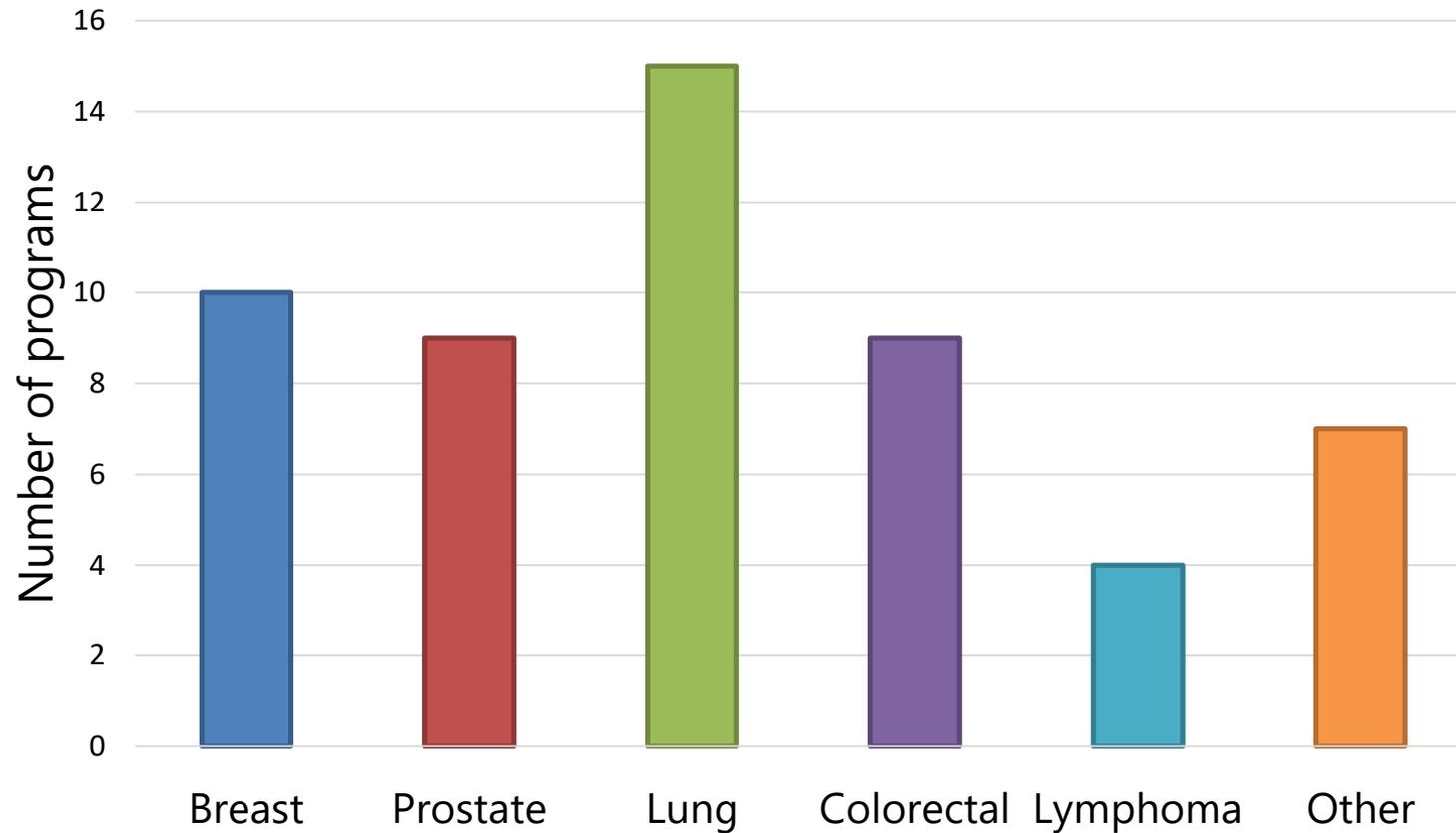
To identify and describe programs in Canada and
comparable international jurisdictions

(21 programs)

Size of programs

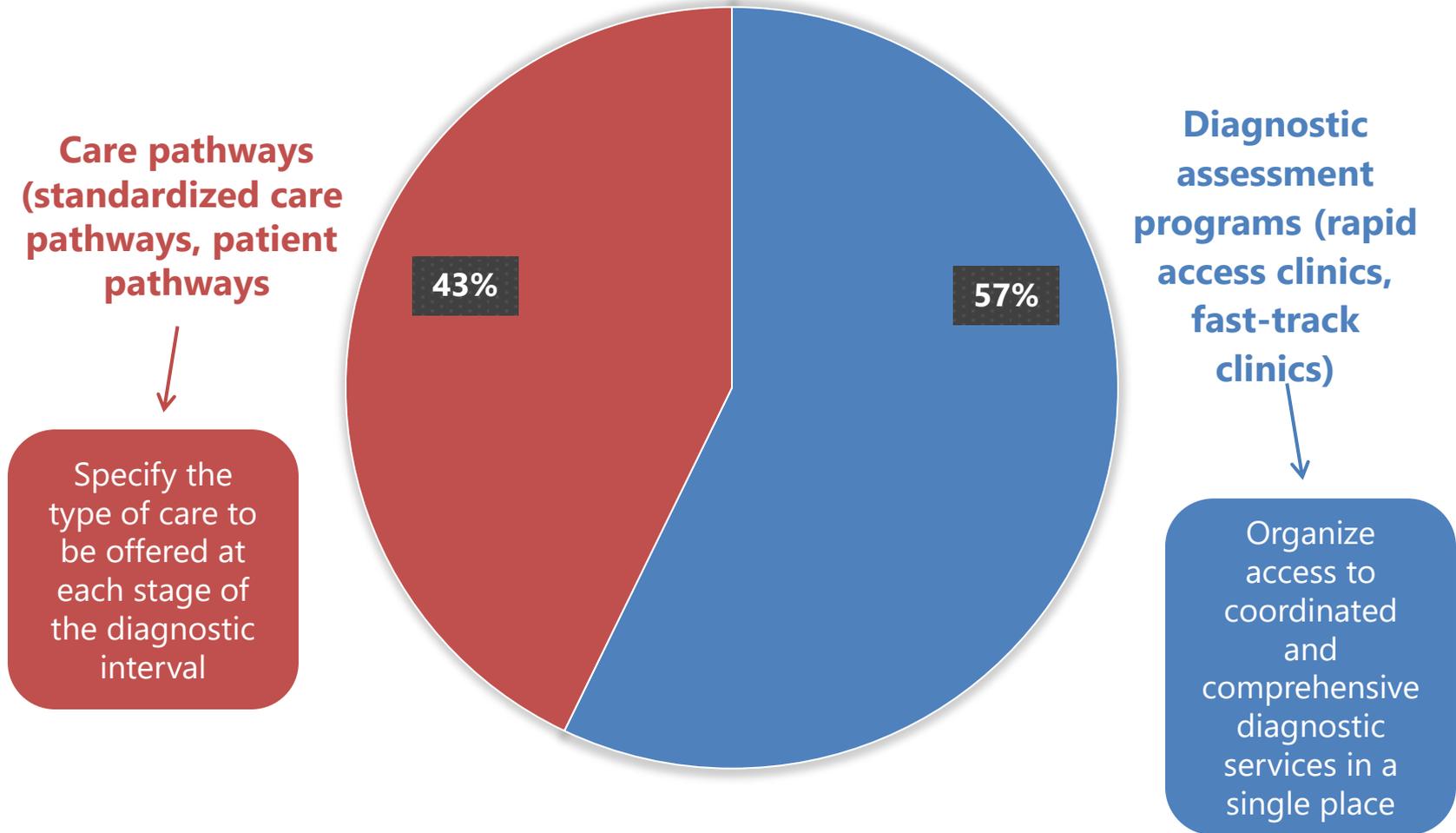


Cancer type(s) targeted

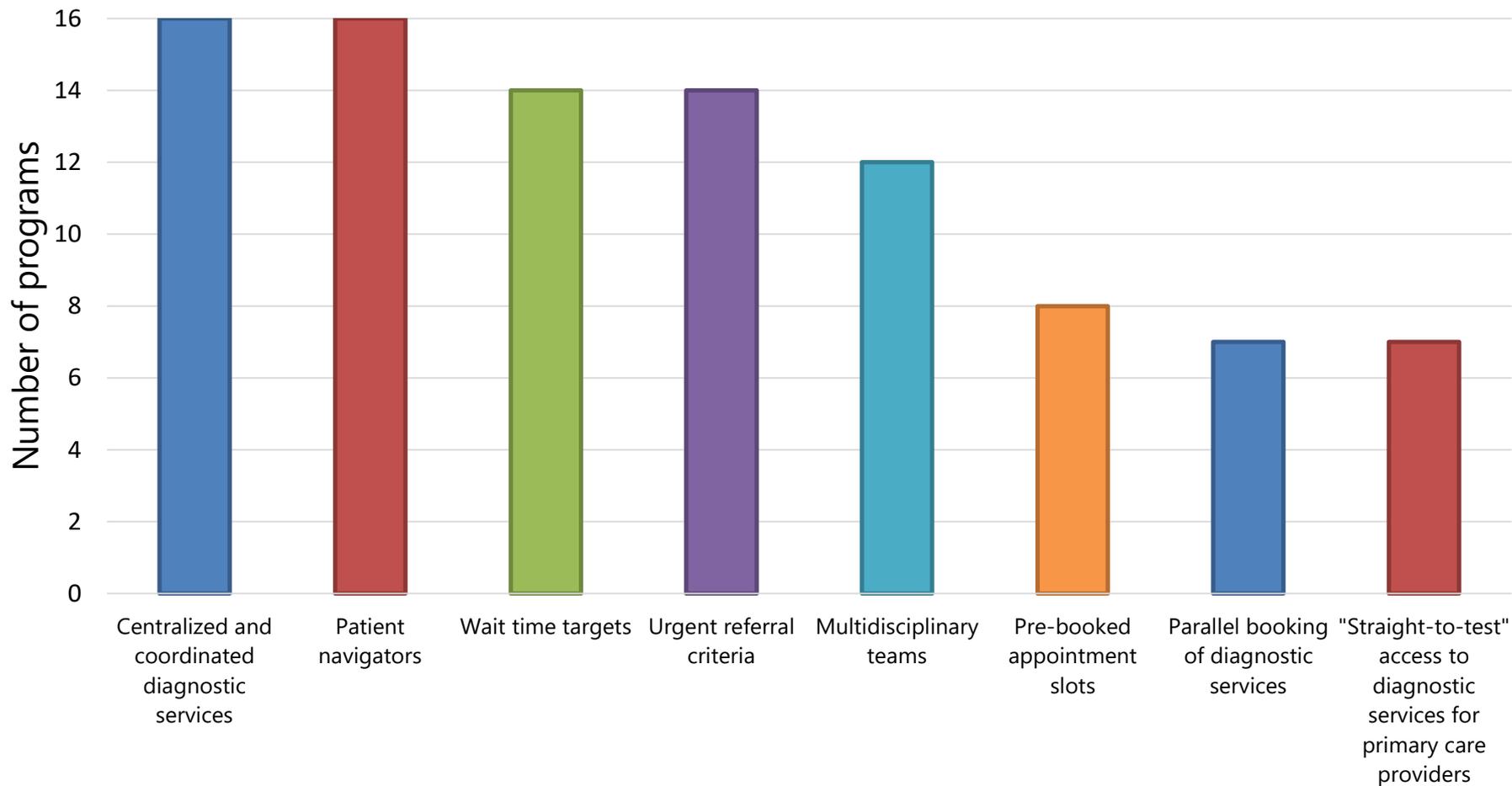


60% of programs targeted multiple types of cancer

Type of programs



Program components



Do the programs... decrease wait times?

Consistent, robust, statistically significant improvements observed across multiple:

- ✓ **Types of programs**
- ✓ **Countries**
- ✓ **Cancer types**
- ✓ **Comparator groups**
- ✓ **Time points within the diagnostic interval**

In almost all cases, wait time reductions spanned several days to weeks.

Do the programs... improve the patient experience?

When data were available, patients reported mostly positive experiences across:

- ✓ **Both types of initiatives**
- ✓ **Multiple countries**
- ✓ **Multiple cancer types**
- ✓ **Different comparator groups**

Do the programs... increase early-stage diagnosis and long-term survival?

In most cases, patients seen through the programs showed

No difference in cancer stage at diagnosis

and

No difference in survival at one, two, three, or five years

compared to other patients.

Costs

- Funding received for program implementation
- Funding received for program maintenance
 - Cost and/or resource savings

Enablers

- ✓ Clear rationale for program development
 - ✓ High-level support and funding
- ✓ Building on existing initiatives and program components
 - ✓ Starting small
 - ✓ Core steering committee
 - ✓ Working groups
- ✓ Multi-level and multidisciplinary stakeholder buy-in
 - ✓ Collaborative culture
 - ✓ Clear communication
 - ✓ Rigorous and credible design
 - ✓ Staggered rollout
 - ✓ Effective program components
- ✓ Continuous quality improvement
 - ✓ Evidence of success
 - ✓ Long-term sustainability

Barriers

- X Lack of capacity and resources
 - X Complexity of cancer care
 - X Unintended opportunity costs
- X Difficulties engaging healthcare providers
 - X Time-intensive process
 - X Poor communication
 - X Regional variation
- X Limitations of benchmarks or wait time targets
 - X Sustainability of nurse navigator role
 - X Inadequacy of existing data systems
- X Other: Lack of wait time data, lack of evidence-based guidelines, difficulty investing time up front, difficulty implementing initiatives that take effect all at once, new pressures on service capacity, difficulty dividing start-up funding between sites, demands on providers' time, and lack of clear referral criteria

Recommendations for Alberta

1

Consider rationale for program development:

- ✓ Decrease wait times and improve the patient experience
- ✗ Diagnose cancer earlier and improve long-term survival

2

Capitalize on experiences and learnings of other jurisdictions.

Pros and cons of our methodological approach

- ✓ Iterative process
- ✓ Converging evidence from multiple sources
- ✓ Included effectiveness data and key informant interviews
- X Did not conduct full systematic review or economic evaluation, and did not describe all relevant contextual factors
- X Methodology was not unbiased or comprehensive

Questions?

Full report available at:

<https://www.ihe.ca/publications/initiatives-to-accelerate-the-diagnostic-phase-of-cancer-care-an-environmental-scan>



mpollock@ihe.ca



1.780.448.4881



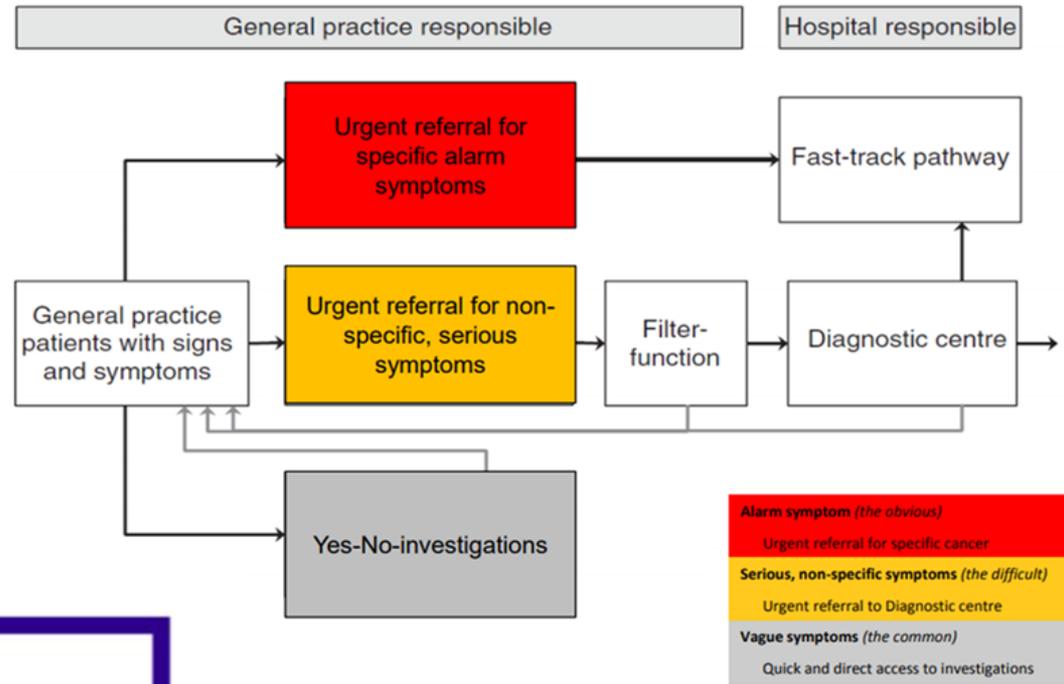
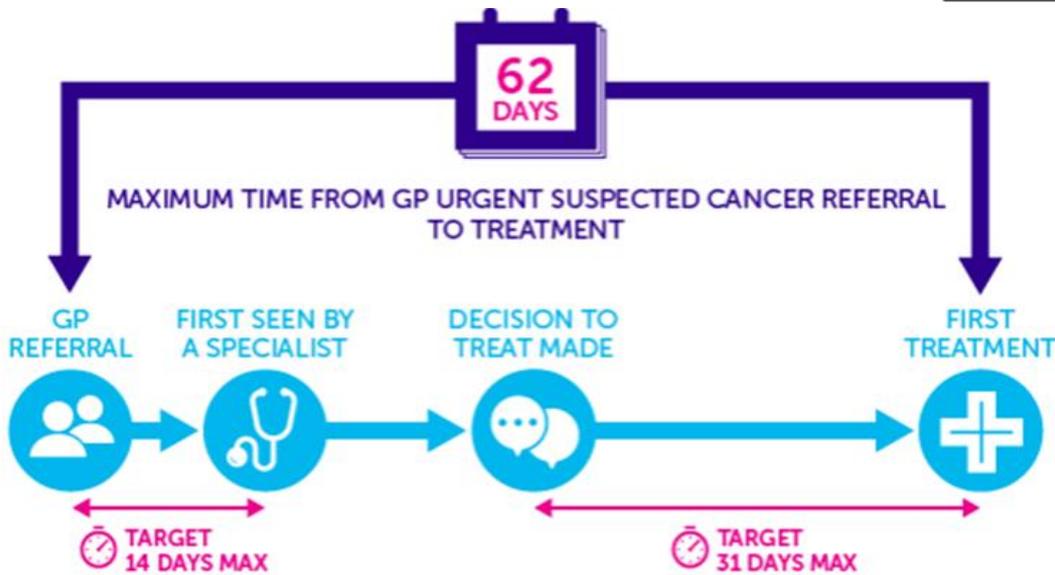
www.ihe.ca



INSTITUTE OF
HEALTH ECONOMICS
ALBERTA CANADA

Examples of programs

*Two Week Wait
(England, 2000)*



*Three Legged Strategy
(Denmark, 2008)*