

# Enhancing Primary Care Utilization Among Cancer Survivors Treated at a Large, Academic Cancer Center: A Quality Improvement Initiative

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### Background

**Cancer Survivorship:**  
The number of cancer survivors continues to rise, with an estimated 18.1 million in the U.S. Research indicates that cancer survivors face complex physical and emotional impacts from cancer and often experience issues with the coordination of care among many experts and primary care providers. Primary care providers (PCPs) play a vital role in survivorship, but inconsistent transitions and unclear care responsibilities create gaps in coordination and continuity.

**Standard 4.8:**  
Commission on Cancer (CoC) Standard 4.8 highlights the urgent need for quality survivorship care. PCPs play a key role in screening for malignancies, managing chronic conditions, and promoting health. Strengthening oncology-primary care coordination ensures seamless care and better outcomes.

**COVID-19 Impact:**  
The pandemic caused a decline in follow-up care, potentially affecting long-term health outcomes.

**Observation:**  
Over 30% of MD Anderson Cancer Center (MDACC) patients who received care one year prior to the pandemic had not returned for follow-up.

**Objective:**  
Increase PCP utilization among cancer survivors who had not visited MDACC in over two years.

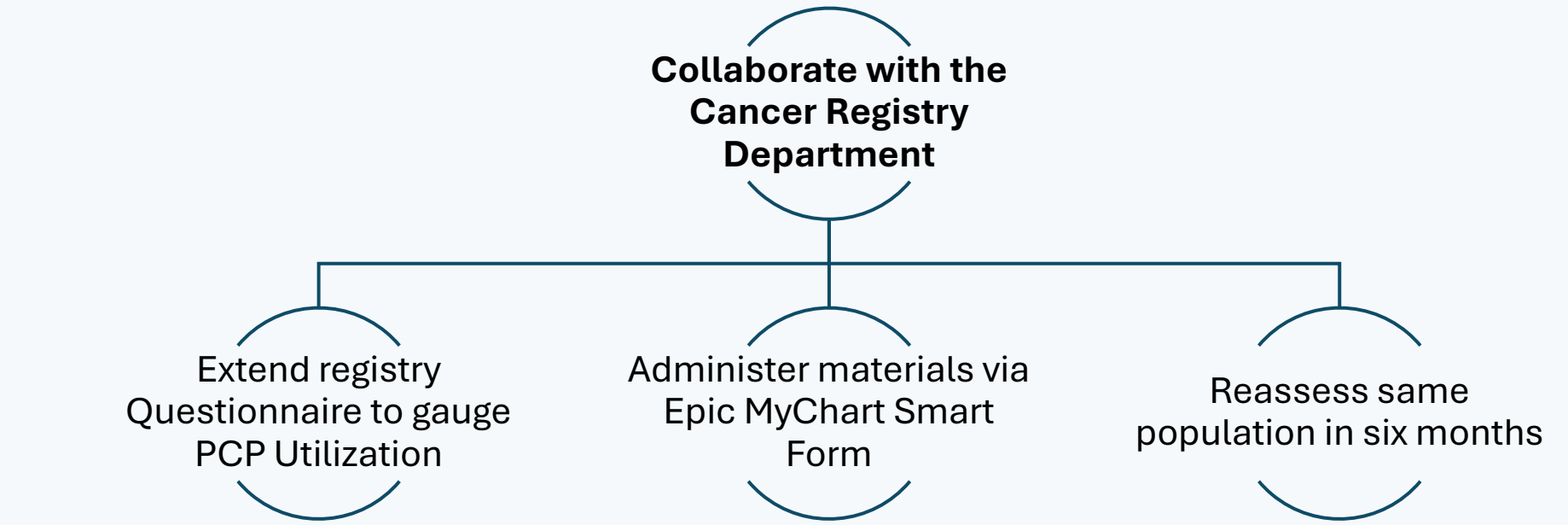
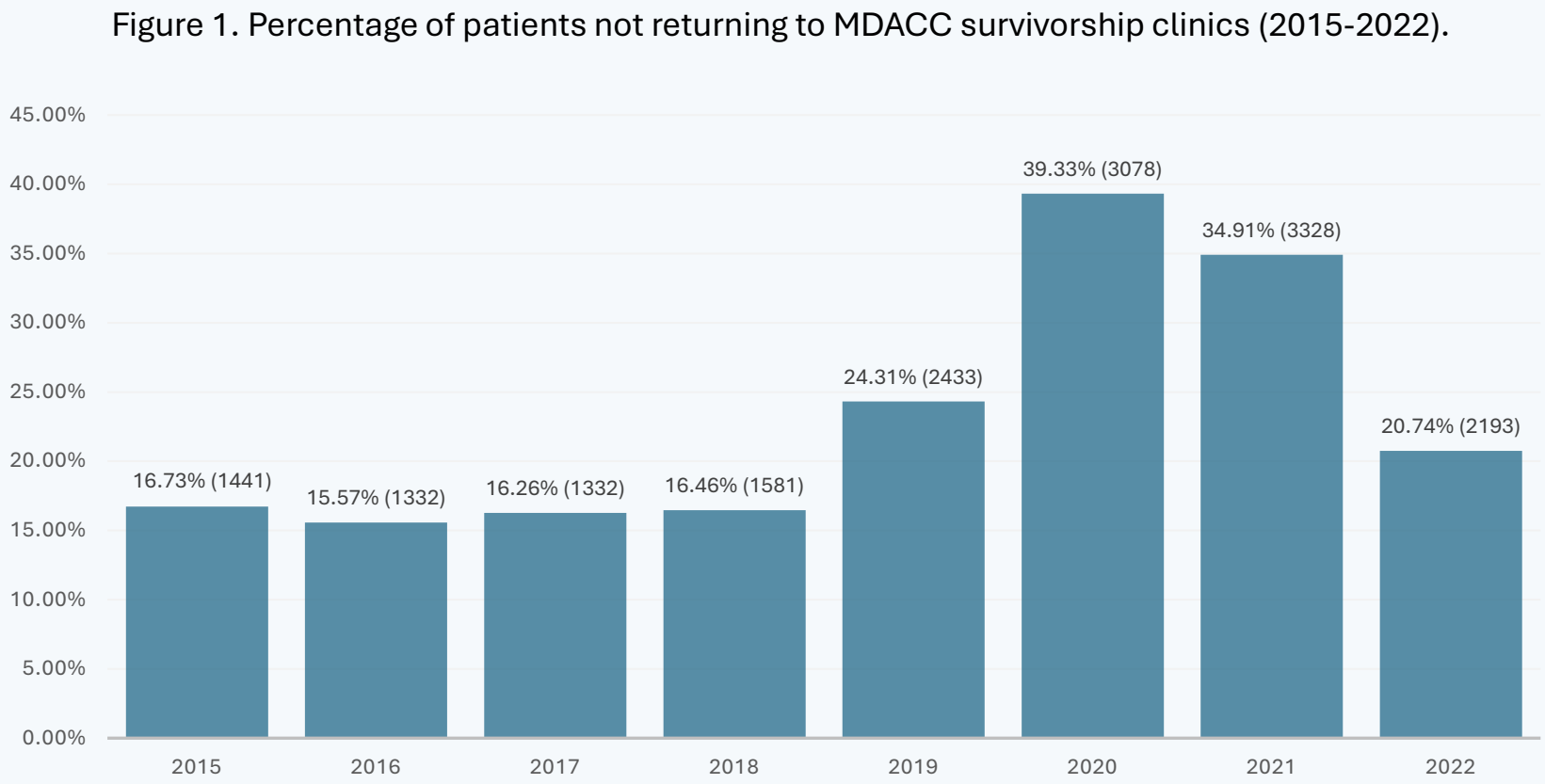


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework for Enhancing Primary Care Utilization Among Cancer Survivors Through MDACC the Cancer Registry.

**Methods**  
**Questionnaire Expansion:**  
The MDACC Cancer Registry Follow-Up questionnaire was modified to include PCP utilization assessment.

**Patient Outreach:**  
Contacted 1,450 survivors via MyChart using an Epic Questionnaire. Provided educational materials to encourage PCP engagement.

**Data Collection:**  
Baseline data on PCP utilization was gathered. Planned a 6-month follow-up to evaluate changes in PCP utilization.

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**MDAnderson**  
~~Cancer Center~~  
Making Cancer History®

Department of Cancer Registry  
Office of Cancer Survivorship

At MD Anderson Cancer Center, we care about the health of our patients now and in the future. Our cancer registry keeps track of all cancer patients treated at our facilities, even if you have moved away or seen other doctors. This information is important to collect as it helps us to ensure the highest quality of care. Your information will be kept private and safe. We encourage all survivors to see a primary care doctor with a survivorship care plan from your MD Anderson Survivorship Care team. You can message your MD Anderson Survivorship Care Team via MyChart to request any details about a Survivorship Care Plan. [Read more on the benefits of primary care visits.](#)

Help us keep the Cancer Registry current and accurate. Please take a moment to answer the following questions about your survivorship journey.

**Cancer status for the last twelve months**

Free of Cancer: Not Free, Unknown

**Treatment for cancer in the last twelve months:**

None, Chemotherapy, Hormonal Therapy, Radiation, Surgery, Other

**In the last 12 months have you completed a follow-up wellness visit with a primary care physician? (family physician, general internist, nurse practitioner, physician's assistant)**

Yes/No

**If you answered yes, does your primary care physician have access to your cancer survivorship care plan and/or treatment summary?**

Yes/No

**If you wish, please provide the name and phone number of current physician:**

Michael Roth, M.D.  
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Kelly Merriman, MPH, PhD  
Director, Cancer Registry

[Explore this link for help creating a Primary Care Provider](#)

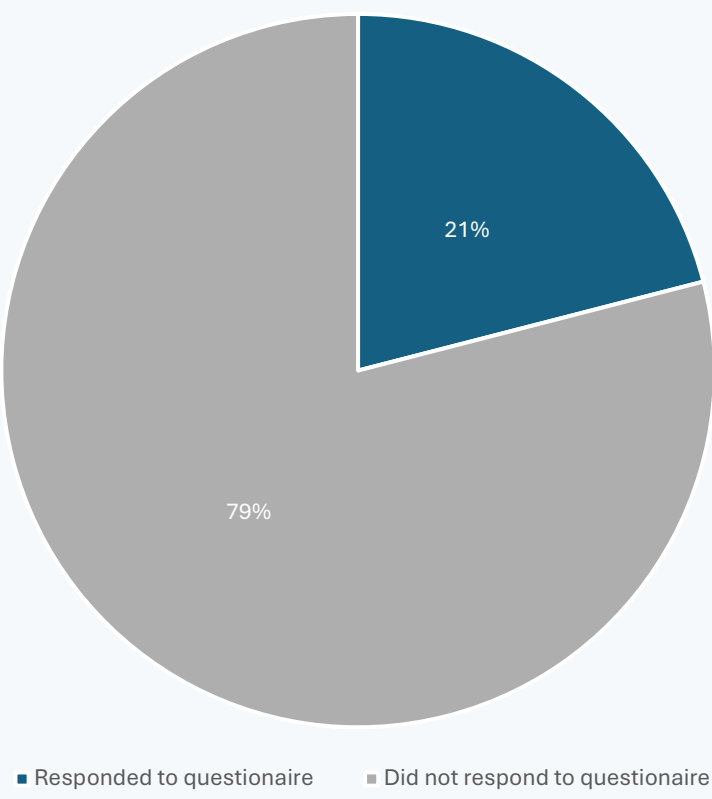
Survivorship Care Plans  
The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center ©2024  
Patient Education

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Figure 3. The MD Anderson Cancer Center Cancer Registry follow-up Questionnaire and Survivorship Care Plan patient education document.

**Results:**  
**Response Rate:**  
298 survivors responded to the questionnaire (21% response rate).

Figure 4. Follow-Up Questionnaire Response Rate Among Cancer Survivors.



**Key Findings:**  
82% of respondents reported completing a wellness visit with a PCP in the previous 12 months. 57% of respondents indicated their PCP could not access their Survivorship Care Plan.

Figure 5. Self-reported completion of a wellness visit among questionnaire respondents.

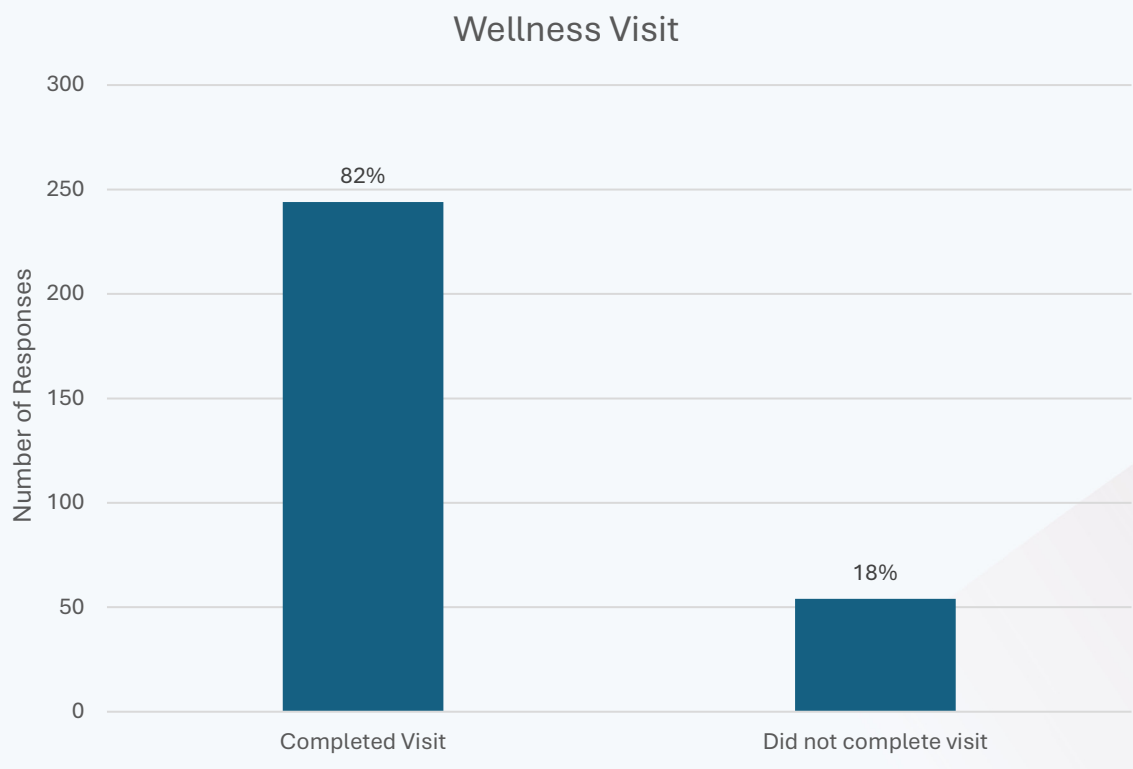
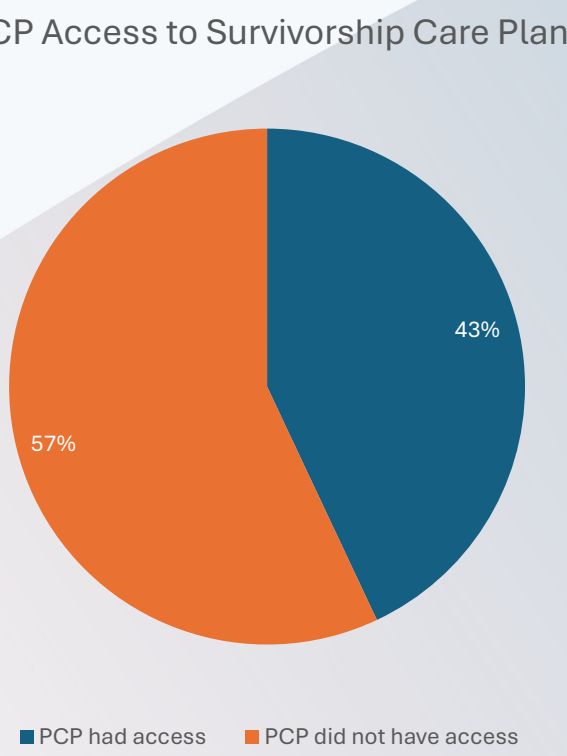


Figure 6. Primary Care Provider (PCP) Access to Survivorship Care Plans.



**Conclusion:**  
**Insights:**  
Structured follow-up and patient education are critical in enhancing PCP engagement and communication gaps between PCPs and cancer centers need to be addressed.

**Future Directions:**  
Expand the initiative to include a larger survivor population. Assess changes in care access prompted by electronic communication.

Resources to help medical providers manage cancer survivors' health with confidence

