

Identification of Mental Health Disparities in Pediatric Oncology Patients

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Introduction

A cancer diagnosis in childhood brings not only physical challenges but also significant mental health concerns. The uncertainty of treatment, social isolation, and disruptions in education contribute to increased risks of anxiety, depression, and emotional distress.

Key Risk Factors

- Demographics:** Female gender and low socioeconomic status
- Healthcare Access:** Lack of insurance limits access
- Cancer Type:** CNS tumors, Hodgkin's lymphoma, bone cancers

Challenges in Mental Health Screening & Care

- Inconsistency in screening and intervention
- Treatment-related cognitive impairments
- Varied implementation of routine mental health monitoring

Aims and Objectives

This study explores how healthcare professionals screen for and address mental health concerns in pediatric cancer patients.

Methods

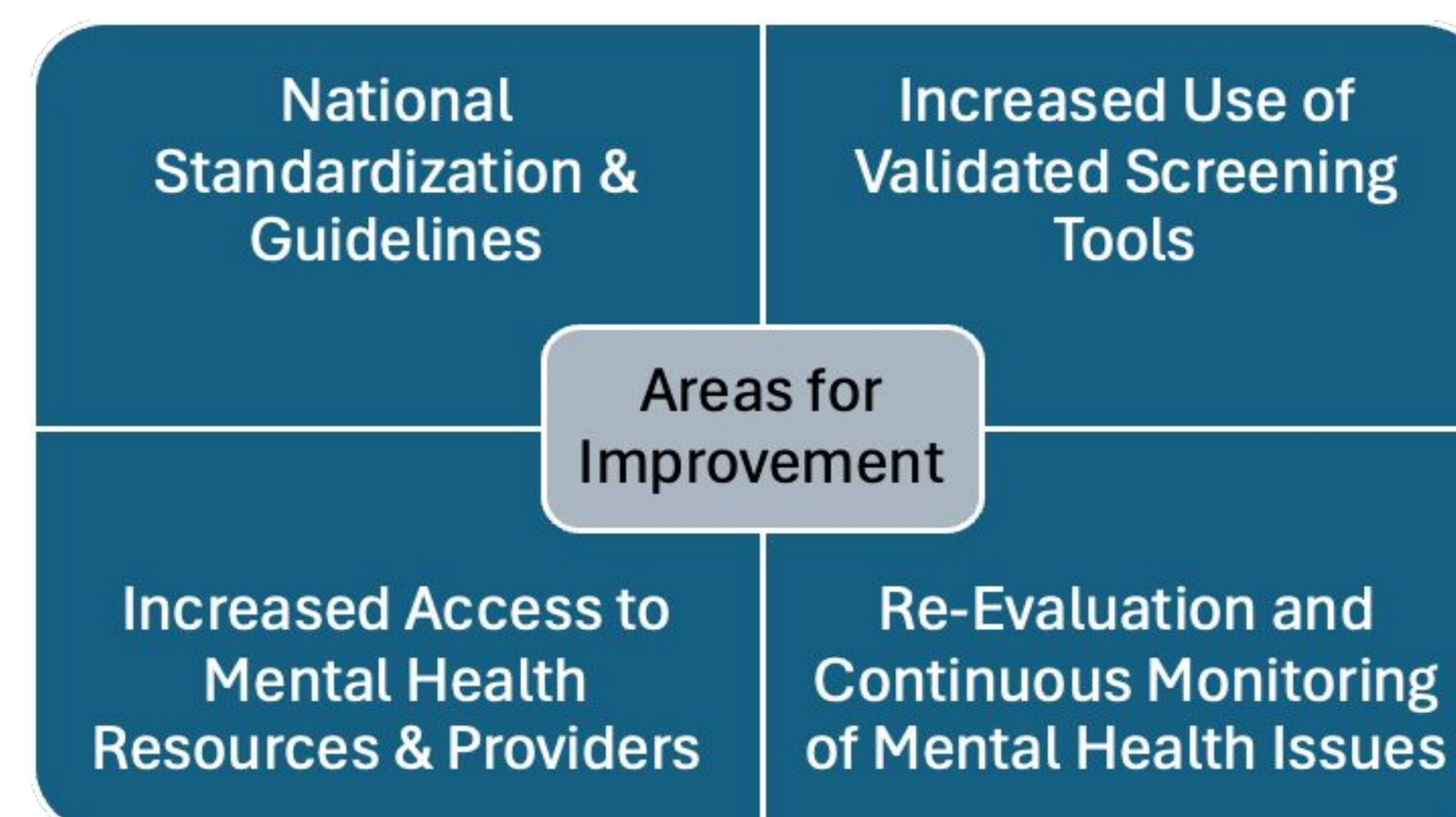
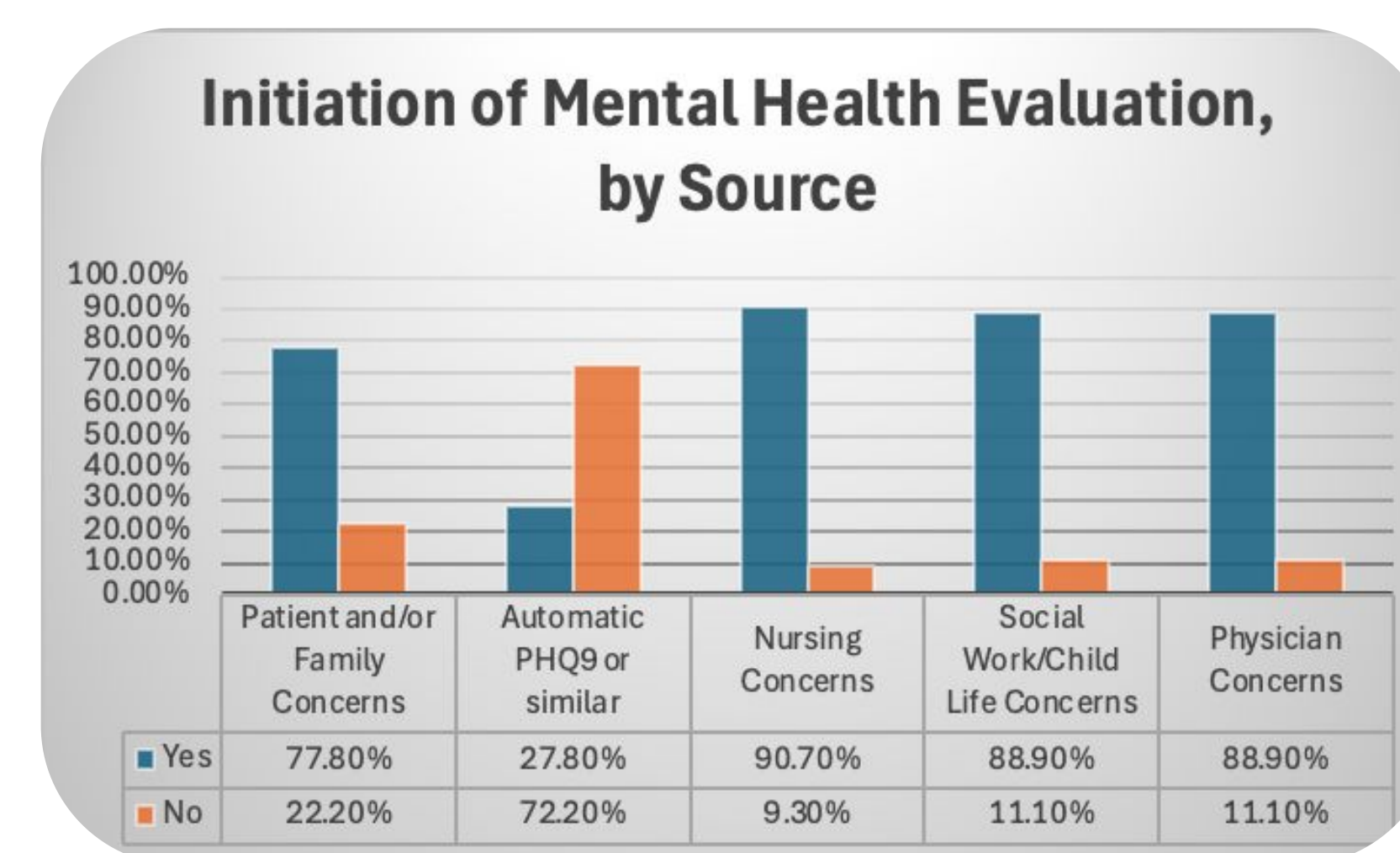
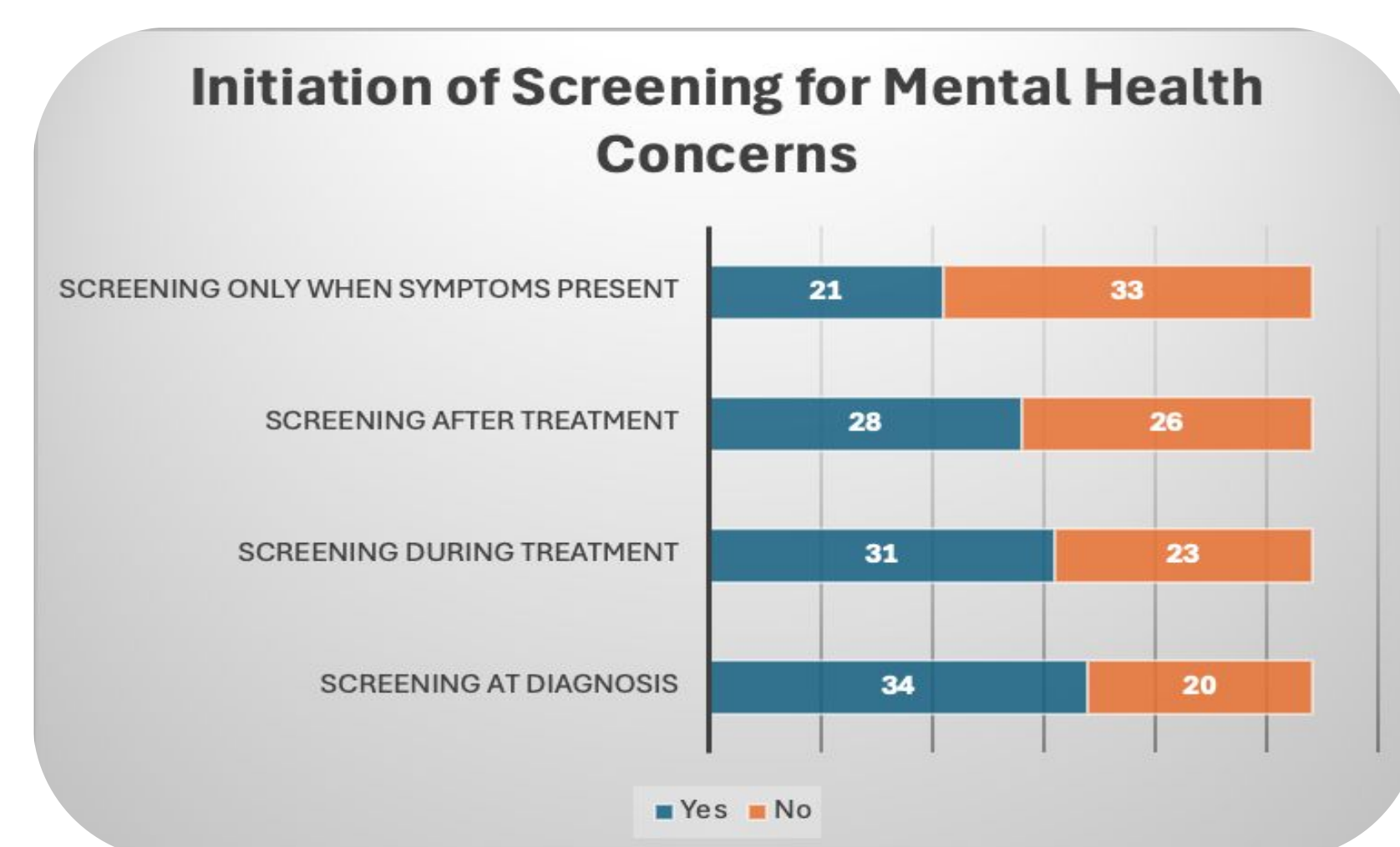
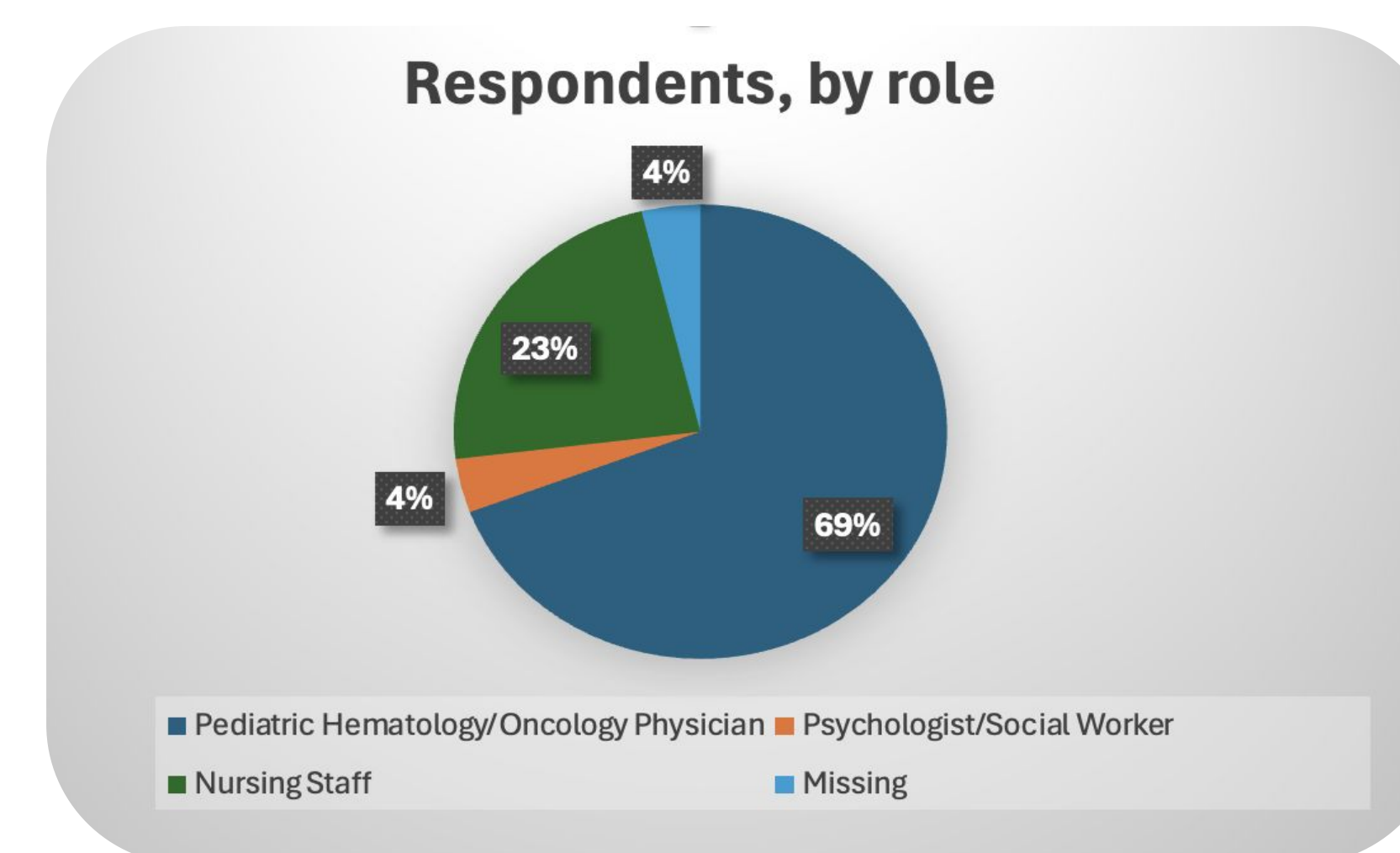
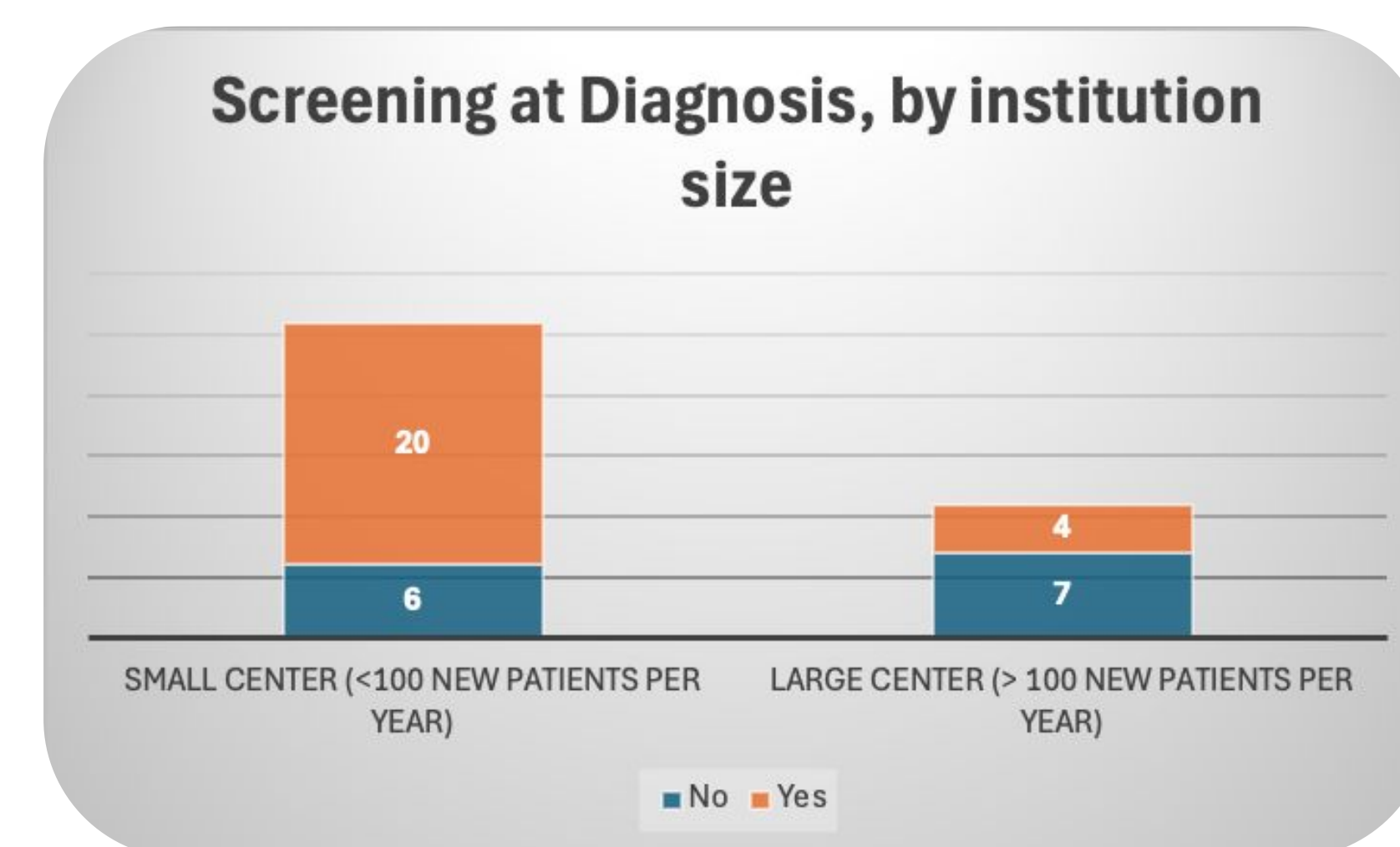
Survey Development: 13 question survey was developed to assess mental health disparities in pediatric cancer patients. Question types included free-response, yes/no, and 5-point Likert scale.

Key Themes: Identification timeline, methods, team demographics, institution size, and screening confidence.

Participants: Pediatric oncology healthcare providers.

Distribution: Shared via the American Society of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology community boards. Sent to pediatric hematology-oncology programs in the AAMC 2024 ERAS Fellowship Directory.

Results



Conclusions

- This study underscores significant variability in mental health screening for pediatric cancer patients, highlighting the need for standardized protocols and increased psychosocial care access.
- The **lack of standardization may result in missed early warning signs, impacting patient outcomes.**
- Consistent mental health evaluations at key points—diagnosis, during treatment, and survivorship—could help normalize screening and ensure timely intervention.
- Routine assessments using validated tools would improve early detection and management, ultimately enhancing patient quality of life.
- Given the increasing survivorship rates in pediatric oncology, addressing these gaps is crucial for long-term psychosocial well-being.

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