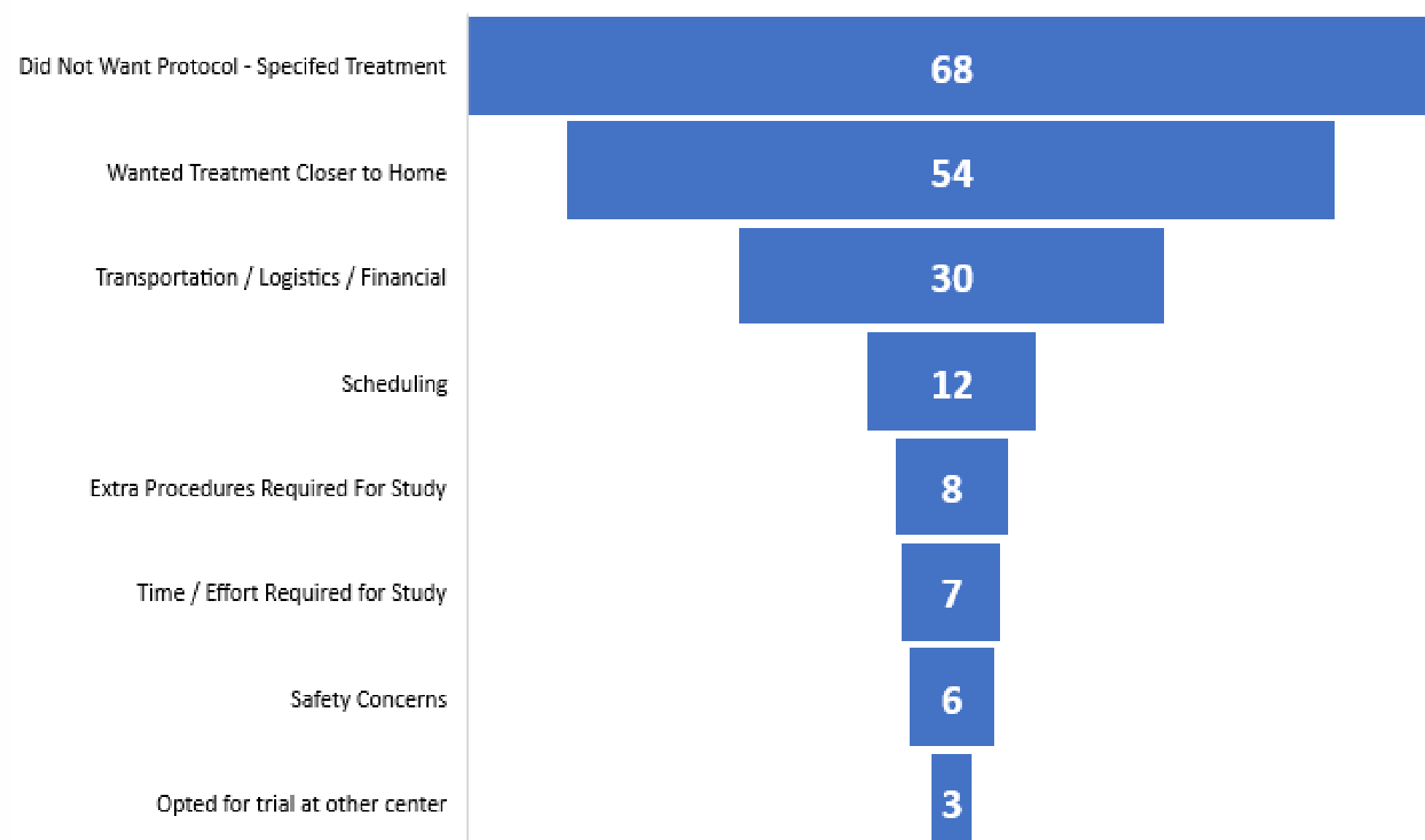


BACKGROUND

In 2020, 43% of the UF Health Cancer Center (UFHCC) catchment area reported living in areas of high social economic vulnerability, 29% of the clinic population living in rural areas where 19% of residents live in persistent poverty. Within this population, the most frequently reported barriers to accessing care are related to financial toxicity. Internal data collected for reasons patients decline trials provided a similar picture and highlighted transportation as another common reason (see graphic).

Top 8 Reasons for Patient Declines (CY 21-23)



The Transportation and Lodging (TLC) Pilot Program was established to address the financial toxicity noted in our population. Funding is through the Climb for Cancer Foundation and supplemented by institutional funding. It was developed via collaboration between the UFHCC Clinical Research Office (CRO) and the UFHCC Office for Community Outreach and Engagement (COE).

GOALS

Key goals for this project include:

1. Improve treatment adherence and trial participation rates;
2. Increase overall trial accrual, but specifically improve recruitment of underrepresented groups to cancer treatment trials;
3. Assess feasibility of financial support programs to ameliorate out-of-pocket health care costs.

METHODS

Patients reporting barriers to transport, financial constraint, and/or food insecurity as an obstacle to receiving treatment (including in clinical trials) are referred to the TLC Program via an electronic questionnaire. Referrals can be made by clinical or research staff members on behalf of the patient, and QR coded informational fliers were created to allow for patients to self-refer. Coordinators, social workers, and other potential referring individuals have been trained to complete this questionnaire, in which they are asked to provide information regarding the required treatment schedule and areas in which assistance is needed. Patients are contacted by a COE Research Navigator who coordinates delivery of available support based on individual need and availability..

Forms of Assistance Offered

- Transportation Support
 - Gas cards
 - Free rides
- Food Assistance
- Overnight accommodation at partnering hotels

OUTCOMES

This pilot program is ongoing at this time.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Future directions for this program include assessing functionality of the referral process, short-term outcomes (patient acceptability, percentage of completed visits using TLC resources, etc.) and long-term outcomes (rates of trial declinations associated with travel and other financial concerns, the impact of intervention on the enrollment of underrepresented groups to treatment trials, and observed treatment compliance for patients, etc.) Additional resources and funding can be made available for ongoing support and expansion of this program if it is seen to be beneficial.

CONTACT

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