

# Utilizing Mental Health Screenings to Guide Integration of Psychiatric Services within Post-Liver Transplant Clinic

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## Background

- Liver transplant patients have a high prevalence of depression and anxiety, which can negatively impact transplant outcomes<sup>1</sup>
- Routine screening for depression and referral for treatment is recommended for all liver transplant recipients<sup>2</sup>
- This study examined the impact of implementing routine mental health screenings for post-liver transplant patients at our small transplant center

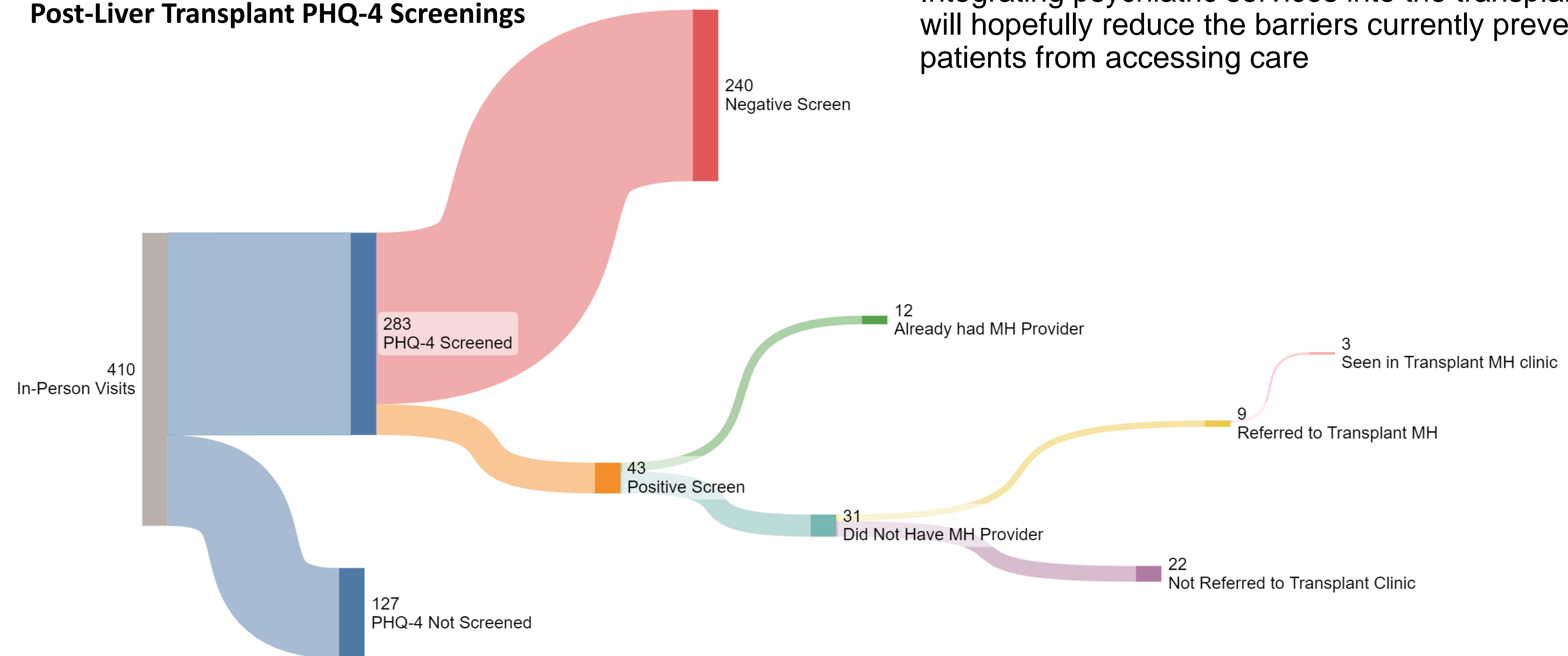
## Methods

- Over seven months, post-liver transplant patients were asked to complete a Patient Health Questionnaire-4 (PHQ-4) at in-person visits in the transplant clinic
- If patients had a positive screen (a score  $\geq 3$  for either anxiety or depression subscales), referral to a transplant mental health provider was offered to the patient
- Rates of PHQ-4 completion, positive PHQ-4 screens, mental health referrals, and referral completion were calculated via chart review

## Results

- PHQ-4s were completed in 283 out of 410 in-person post-liver transplant clinic visits, equating to 69% screening rate
- There were 43 positive screens, giving a 15% positive screening rate
- Of the 43 positive screens, 12 patients already had a mental health provider and declined referral to transplant mental health
- Of the 31 remaining, 9 were referred to transplant mental health providers
- Of these, 3 were eventually seen in clinic.
- 22 patients were not referred to transplant clinic, despite meeting criteria

### Post-Liver Transplant PHQ-4 Screenings



Made at SankeyMATIC.com



Sample PHQ-4 Forms

## Discussion

- A small fraction of patients who screened positive saw a mental health provider, despite the screening protocol
- Errors in PHQ-4 interpretation, including incorrectly summed scores and missed positive screens, led to incomplete referrals

## Conclusions/Implications

- Our screening protocol identified patients who may benefit from further mental health evaluation and treatment
- Screening patients via EMR may reduce the number of missed referrals due to errors in PHQ-4 interpretation
- Integrating psychiatric services into the transplant clinic will hopefully reduce the barriers currently preventing patients from accessing care

## References

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- 2: Zimbrea, P. C., Andrews, S. R., Hussain, F., Fireman, M., Kuntz, K., Niazi, S. K., Simpson, S. A., Soeprono, T., Winder, G. S., & Jowsey-Gregoire, S. G. (2023). ACLP Best Practice Guidance: Evaluation and Treatment of Depression in Solid Organ Transplant Recipients. *Journal of the Academy of Consultation-Liaison Psychiatry*, 64(4), 357–370.