

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

Whittney Thoman, MS, ACSM-CEP, ACSM-EIM-III, ACSM-CET  
Project Consultant, Survivorship Program  
The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center  
Houston, Texas

# Disclosure

I have no financial interests or relationships to disclose.

© American College of Surgeons. Content cannot be reproduced or repurposed without written permission of the American College of Surgeons.

**ACS Cancer Conference 2025** | March 12-14 | Phoenix, AZ

**ACS Cancer Programs**  
American College of Surgeons

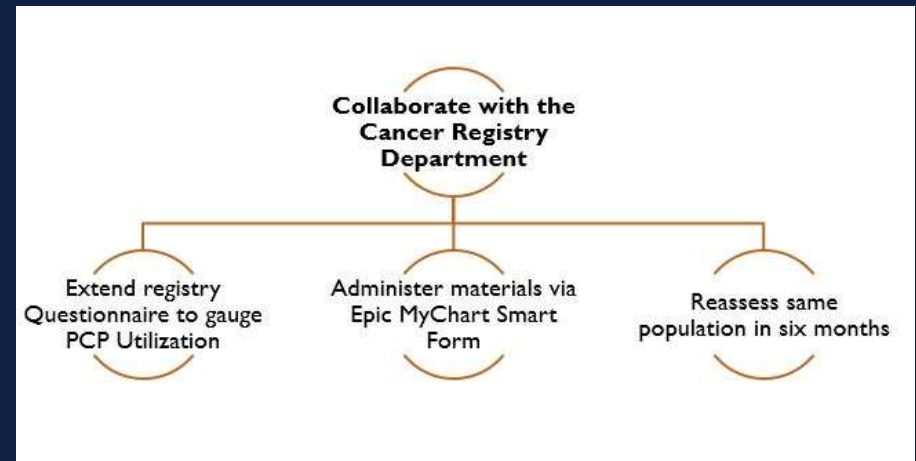
# Background

- **Cancer Survivorship**
  - Over 18.1 million cancer survivors in the U.S.
  - Survivors experience complex physical and emotional impacts.
  - Challenges in care coordination between oncologists and PCPs.
- **Standard 4.8 – Commission on Cancer (CoC)**
  - Emphasizes quality survivorship care.
  - PCPs play a role in screening, chronic disease management, and health promotion.
- **COVID-19 Impact**
  - Decline in follow-up care, affecting long-term outcomes.
  - Over 30% of MDACC patients had not returned for follow-up since pre-pandemic.

© American College of Surgeons. Content cannot be reproduced or repurposed without written permission of the American College of Surgeons.

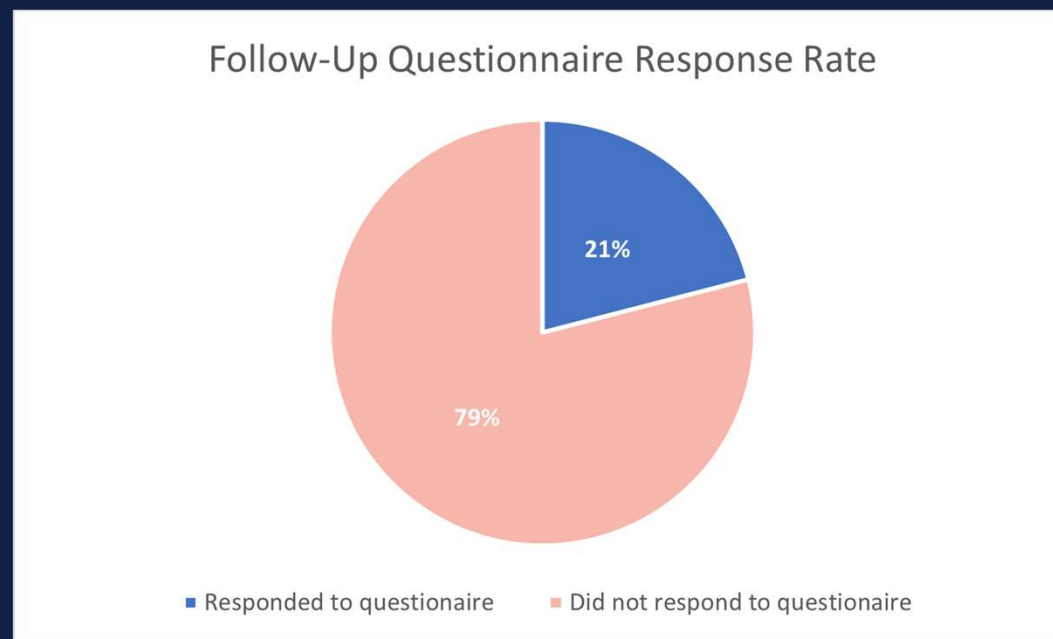
# Objective & Methods

- **Objective:**
  - Increase PCP utilization among cancer survivors absent from MDACC for over two years.
- **Methods:**
  - Expanded MDACC Cancer Registry Questionnaire to assess PCP use.
  - Patient outreach (1,450 survivors) via Epic MyChart.
  - Educational materials on PCP engagement.
  - Baseline data collection & six-month follow-up.



© American College of Surgeons. Content cannot be reproduced or repurposed without written permission of the American College of Surgeons.

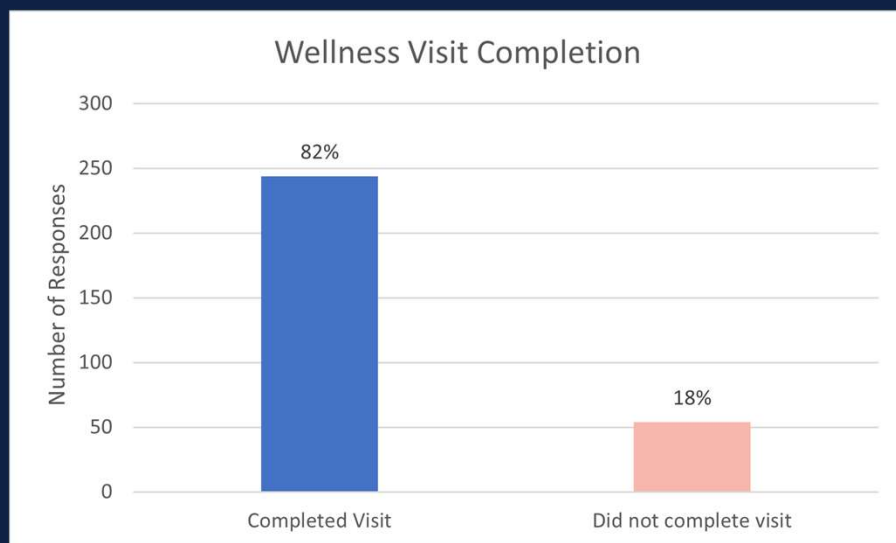
# Results – Response Rate



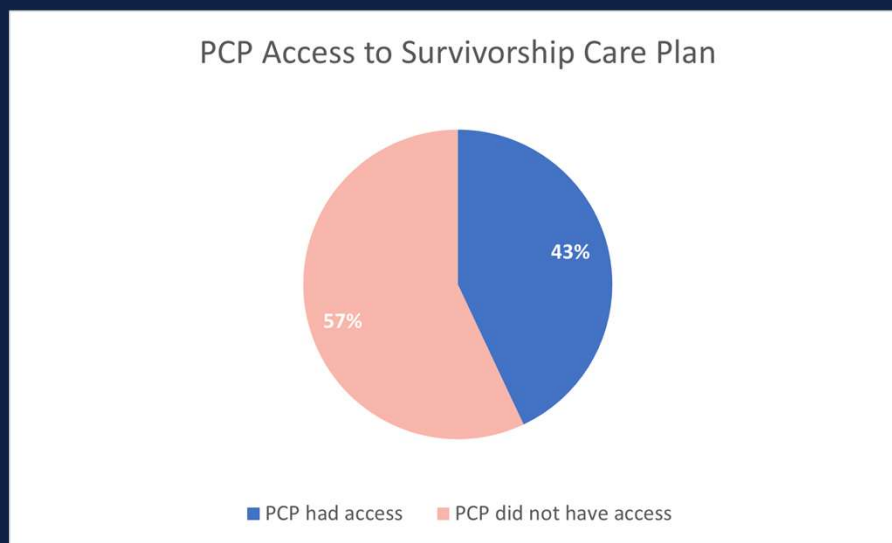
© American College of Surgeons. Content cannot be reproduced or repurposed without written permission of the American College of Surgeons.

# Results – PCP Utilization

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.



© American College of Surgeons. Content cannot be reproduced or repurposed without written permission of the American College of Surgeons.

# Insights



## Education

Structured follow-up & patient education enhance PCP engagement.



## Integration

Lack of survivorship care plan integration into primary care.



## Communication

Gaps in communication between oncology teams and PCPs.



## Access

Need for better electronic communication & shared access.

© American College of Surgeons. Content cannot be reproduced or repurposed without written permission of the American College of Surgeons.

# Conclusion & Future Directions

- **Conclusion:**
  - Cancer survivors benefit from better PCP coordination.
  - Addressing care plan access gaps is critical.
- **Future Directions:**
  - Expand initiative to more survivors.
  - Improve electronic communication to PCPs.
  - Assess long-term impact of outreach efforts.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS  
MD Anderson Cancer Center

PATIENT EDUCATION

### Survivorship Care Plans

A survivorship care plan (SCP) is a personal outline of your cancer journey. It includes future health recommendations. You should get an SCP from your survivorship care team when you finish active treatment. Your SCP includes a treatment summary and a follow-up plan.

**Treatment summary includes:**

- Your cancer doctor's contact information
- Complete record of your medical history
- Treatment-related side effects or problems

**Follow-up plan includes:**

- Recommendations for your future care
- Guidelines for follow-up visits
- Help to manage side effects
- Healthy behaviors that lower your cancer risk (such as not drinking alcohol and smoking cessation)
- Exercise and nutrition programs
- Help to identify and manage symptoms
- Cancer screening exams

**Benefits of a SCP**

A survivorship care plan helps to make your switch from cancer treatment to survivorship care easier. You benefit when you share your SCP with your primary care provider (PCP). Your follow-up care and communication with your PCP is improved. A SCP can help to better manage your care between all those involved.

It is important to communicate with your health care team. Your SCP can be changed at any time by your care team as needed. Notes in your SCP from your MD Anderson survivorship team can help you and your PCP tell the difference between normal long-term effects of cancer and its treatment and concerning symptoms. These notes are important for PCPs when they prescribe medicines. Some medicines may not mix well with some post-cancer treatments. Some may also increase your risk for the cancer to return. Patients who have a SCP may have more confidence in their PCP's understanding of their needs and ability to provide follow-up care.

If you have any questions about SCPs, send a message to your MD Anderson Survivorship Care Team through MyChart.

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

Page 1 of 1

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS  
MD Anderson Cancer Center

PATIENT EDUCATION

### Primary Care Providers

Primary care providers (PCPs) take care of your day-to-day health needs. A long-term relationship with a PCP can help keep you healthy and lower medical costs. A PCP can teach you ways to stay healthy, treat you when you are sick and help you get more advanced care when you need it.

**!** Your cancer doctor is not your PCP. It is very important for you to see a PCP even while in active cancer treatment. This is especially true for patients who live outside of the surrounding Houston, TX area. Your PCP will be able to work with your cancer doctor to best care for you when you return home.

Many types of health care providers offer primary care. Different specialists are trained to see certain types of patients:

- Family medicine doctors treat patients of all ages. They are trained in adult medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics, geriatric medicine and musculoskeletal care.
- Pediatricians care for infants, children, adolescents and young adults.
- Internists, or internal medicine doctors treat adults. Like family doctors, they help manage many short and long-term conditions.
- Geriatricians focus on treating older adults.
- Obstetricians and gynecologists focus on women's health and pregnancy.
- Nurse practitioners and physician assistants also provide primary care. They serve as part of a team that includes a PCP. The physician has overall responsibility for you.

**Primary Care Provider Services**

A PCP works with you to manage your health care needs and can provide many services.

**A yearly physical or well-check visit checks for:**

- High blood pressure
- Other risk factors for heart disease
- High cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Vaccines to prevent illness

**Health problems may be diagnosed and treated by:**

- Doing lab tests to diagnose your condition
- Prescribing medicines for your condition
- Checking for interactions with other medicines you take
- Treating conditions such as asthma, migraine or urinary tract infections
- Providing wound care
- Managing fever or dehydration

Primary Care Providers  
The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center ©2023  
Patient Education

Page 1 of 2

**Cancer Survivorship Professional Education**

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

Learn more: [MDAnderson.org/SurvivorshipEducation](https://MDAnderson.org/SurvivorshipEducation)

© American College of Surgeons. Content cannot be reproduced or repurposed without written permission of the American College of Surgeons.