

Telephone Triage (TT): A proactive approach to cancer care

Laura Healey*, Gillian Blanchard, Zoe Feighan, Casey Hutchinson
 Department of Medical Oncology, Calvary Mater Newcastle, Waratah, NSW, Australia.

Introduction

Phone triage (PT) enables prompt communication between healthcare providers and patients. This can expedite the diagnostic process and promote early engagement with healthcare services, fostering a proactive approach to cancer care. Through targeted questioning and risk assessment, nurses can identify high-risk individuals, ensuring urgent cases are fast-tracked for evaluation and intervention. Within our treatment centre PT may be attended by Registered Nurses (RN), Transitional Nurse Practitioners (TNP) and Nurse Practitioners (NP).

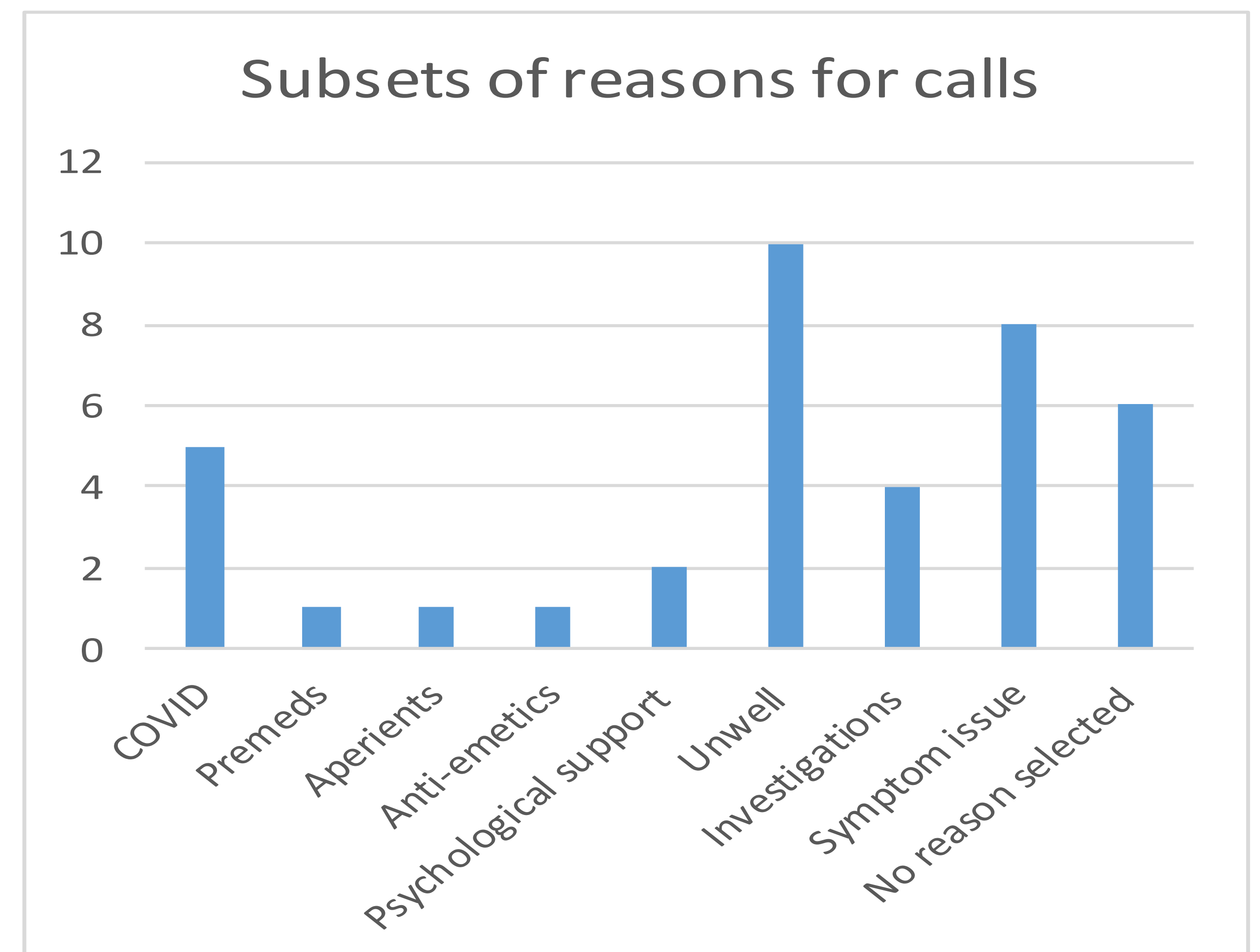
Aim

To determine what level of skill is needed to ensure the most appropriate clinical advice is given and whether this resulted in problem resolution without adverse event (AE).

Method

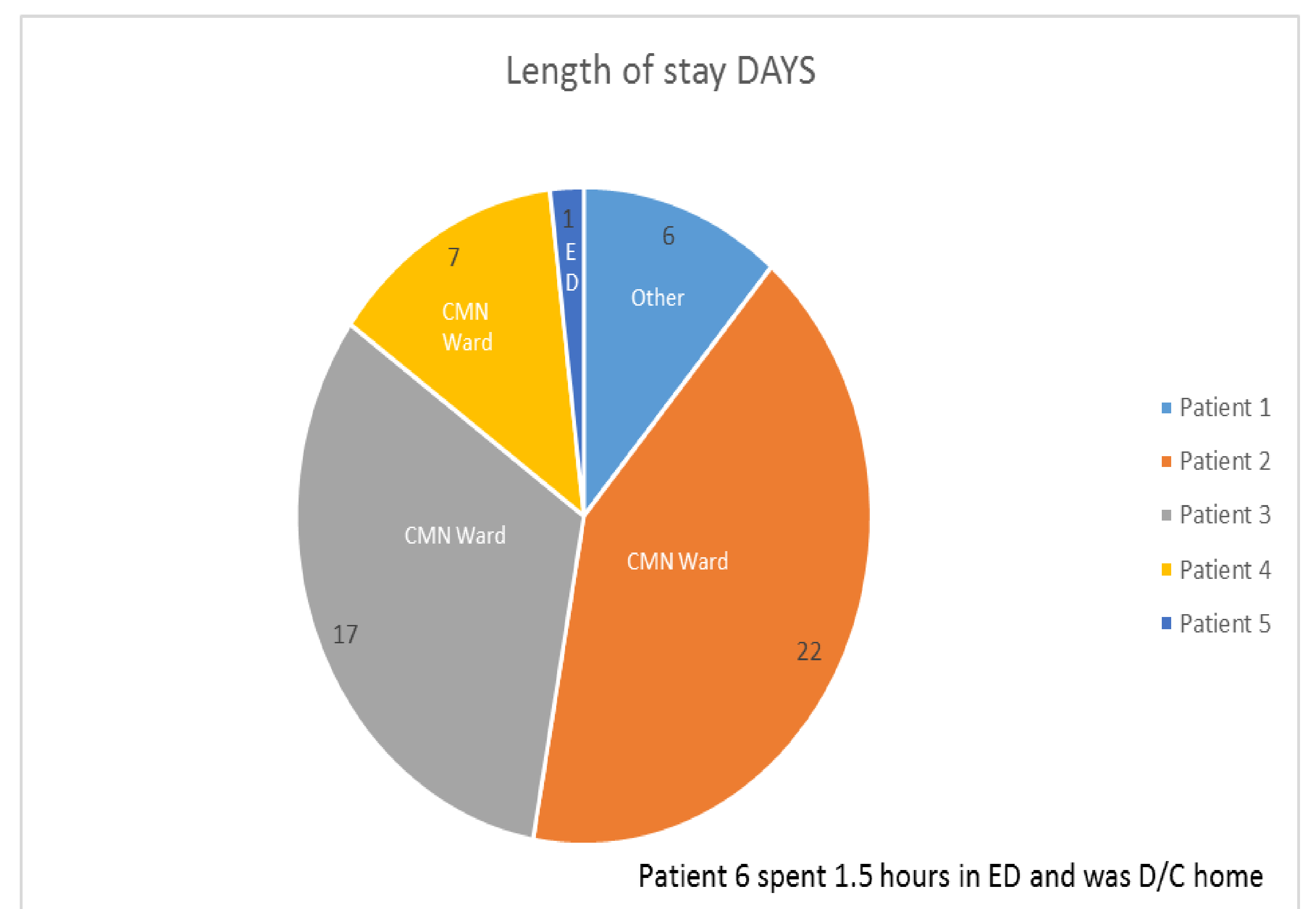
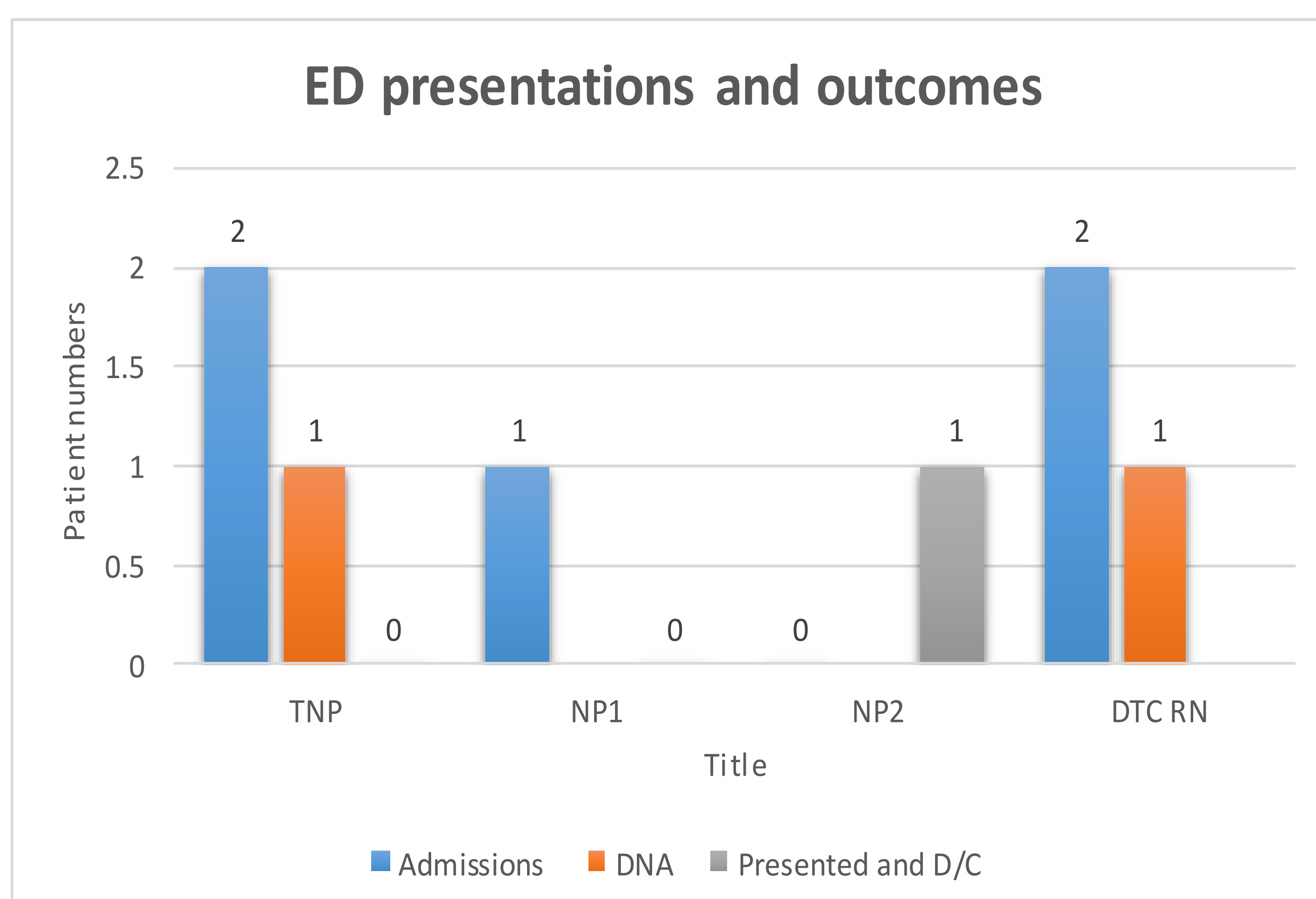
An audit of phone calls was attended during the period March – April 2023. 40 phone calls were audited with 10 calls from each RN, TNP and NP x 2.

We reviewed the complexity of phone calls, advice that patients were given, adherence, escalation required to complete episode of care (EOC) and AE.



Results

- The results identified that the advice given by RN, TNP and NP did not result in any adverse event.
- Completion of EOC was longer by the RN.
- Both the TNP and the NPs completed the EOC at point of call due to the extension of their scope of practice.
- Where there was minor variation this laid in the ability to prescribe.
- No adverse events were identified related to the advice given.
- All but N=1 patient recommended to attend ED resulted in an admission to hospital for >24 hours
- Of the N=7 who were recommended to attend ED only N=2 did not adhere to this advice but this did not result in an AE.



Conclusion

As healthcare systems evolve, recognising and harnessing the potential of PT is paramount for improving cancer patient outcomes. This audit shows that oncology knowledge is the most important factor in triaging these patients and that all nurses working within their scope of practice can improve patient outcomes.