



Background

- The diagnosis of a malignancy impacts many aspects of a patient's life, including cognition, emotion, spiritual belief and finance.
- Current cancer treatment models focus heavily on the medical management of malignancies (chemotherapy, radiation and surgery) instead of the psychosocial wellness of the patient.
- Prompt recognition, documentation and management of distress increases a patient's adherence to cancer treatment, reduces the risk of excess toxicities and improves emotional well-being¹.

Study Goal

- Develop a process map to integrate and implement the NCCN approved psychosocial distress screening tool into the oncology clinic workflow²

Project Design

- Review the historical utilization of a distress screening tool at Birmingham Veteran Affairs Medical Center
- Implement protocols to respond to the distress screen and improve referrals to the appropriate specialties (social work, mental health, chaplain, etc.)
- Identify and engage all stakeholders (physicians, nurse practitioners, infusion nurses, nurse navigator, and schedulers) to conduct and review the distress screening tool
- Develop a process map to integrate and implement the NCCN approved psychosocial distress screening tool into the oncology clinic workflow³

NCCN DISTRESS THERMOMETER

Instructions: Please circle the number (0-10) that best describes how much distress you have been experiencing in the past week including today.

Extreme distress (10) to No distress (0)

PROBLEM LIST
Please indicate if any of the following has been a problem for you in the past week including today. Be sure to check YES or NO for each.

YES	NO	Physical Problems
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Child care
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Appearance
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Housing
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bathing/dressing
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Insurance/financial
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Breathing
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Changes in urination
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Work/school
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Constipation
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Treatment decisions
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Diarrhea
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Eating
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fatigue
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Feeling swollen
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dealing with children
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fever
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dealing with partner
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Getting around
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ability to have children
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Indigestion
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Family health issues
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Memory/concentration
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mouth sores
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Depression
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nausea
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fears
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nose dry/congested
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nervousness
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pain
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sadness
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sexual
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Worry
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Skin dry/itchy
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Loss of interest in usual activities
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sleep
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Substance use
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Spiritual/religious concerns
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tingling in hands/feet

Other Problems: _____

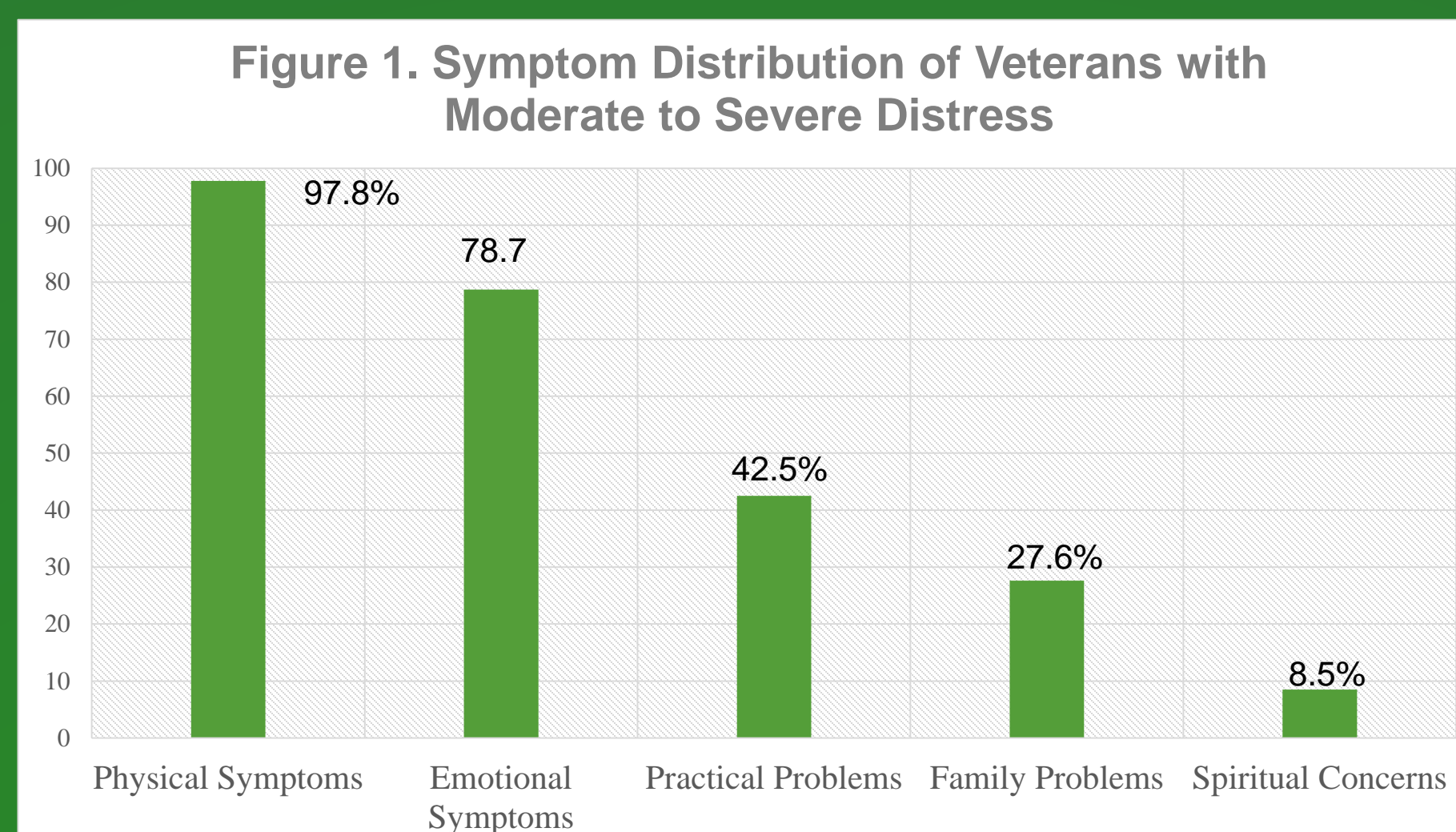
Acknowledgements

- Birmingham VA Medical Center, specifically the nurse practitioners, infusion nurses and oncology navigator

PDSA Cycle 1

October 2015 to June 2016

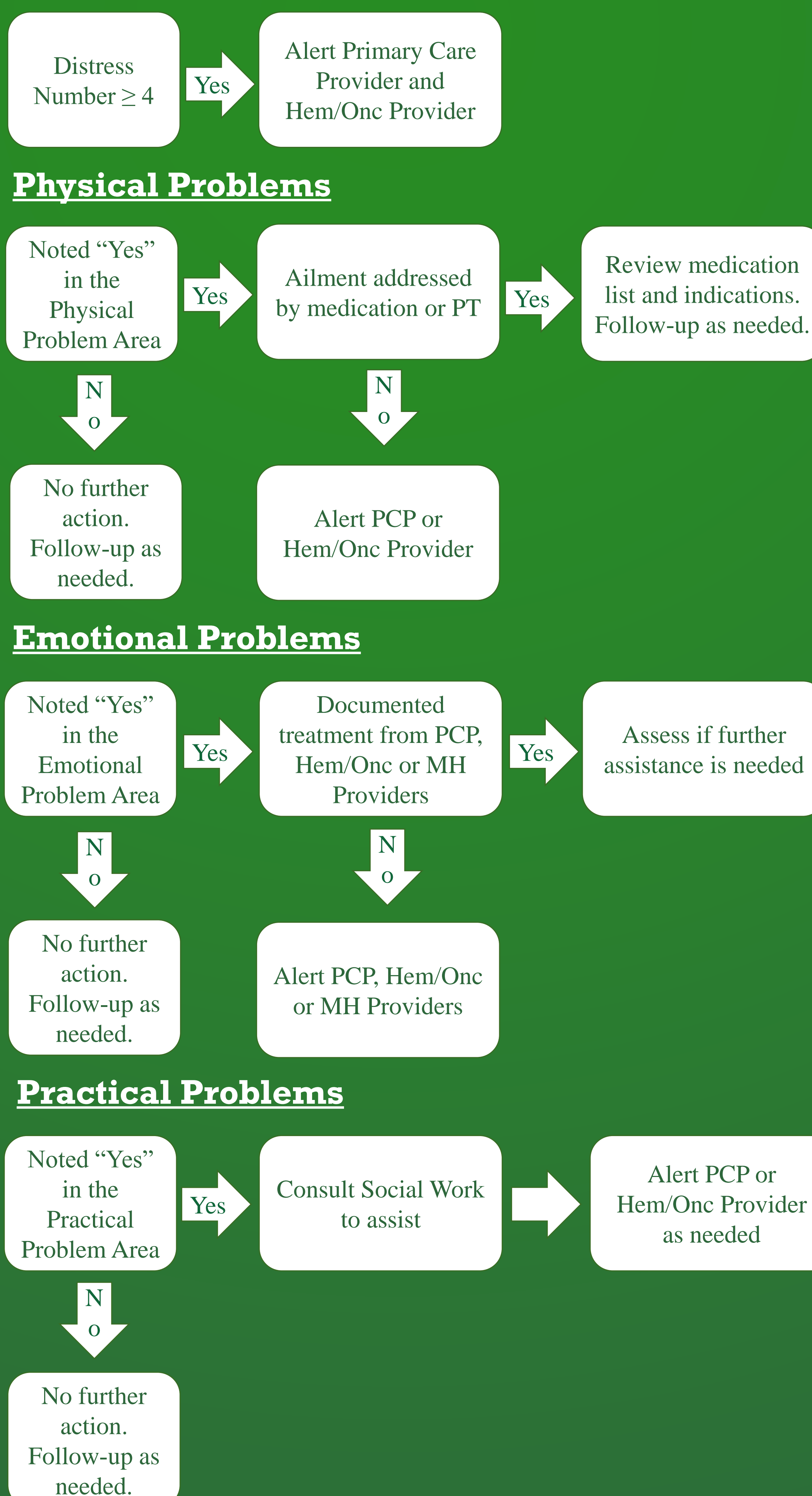
- 95 veterans were administered the Distress Screen.
- 47 veterans (49.5%) rated his/her distress level between 4 and 10 (moderate to severe level of distress).



- Figure 2: responses to those reporting moderate to severe

Response	N
Mental Health Consult	1
Social Work Consult	1
Chaplain	0
Others (Travel/Lodging, Dental, Hospice, Tobacco Cessation and Nutrition)	7

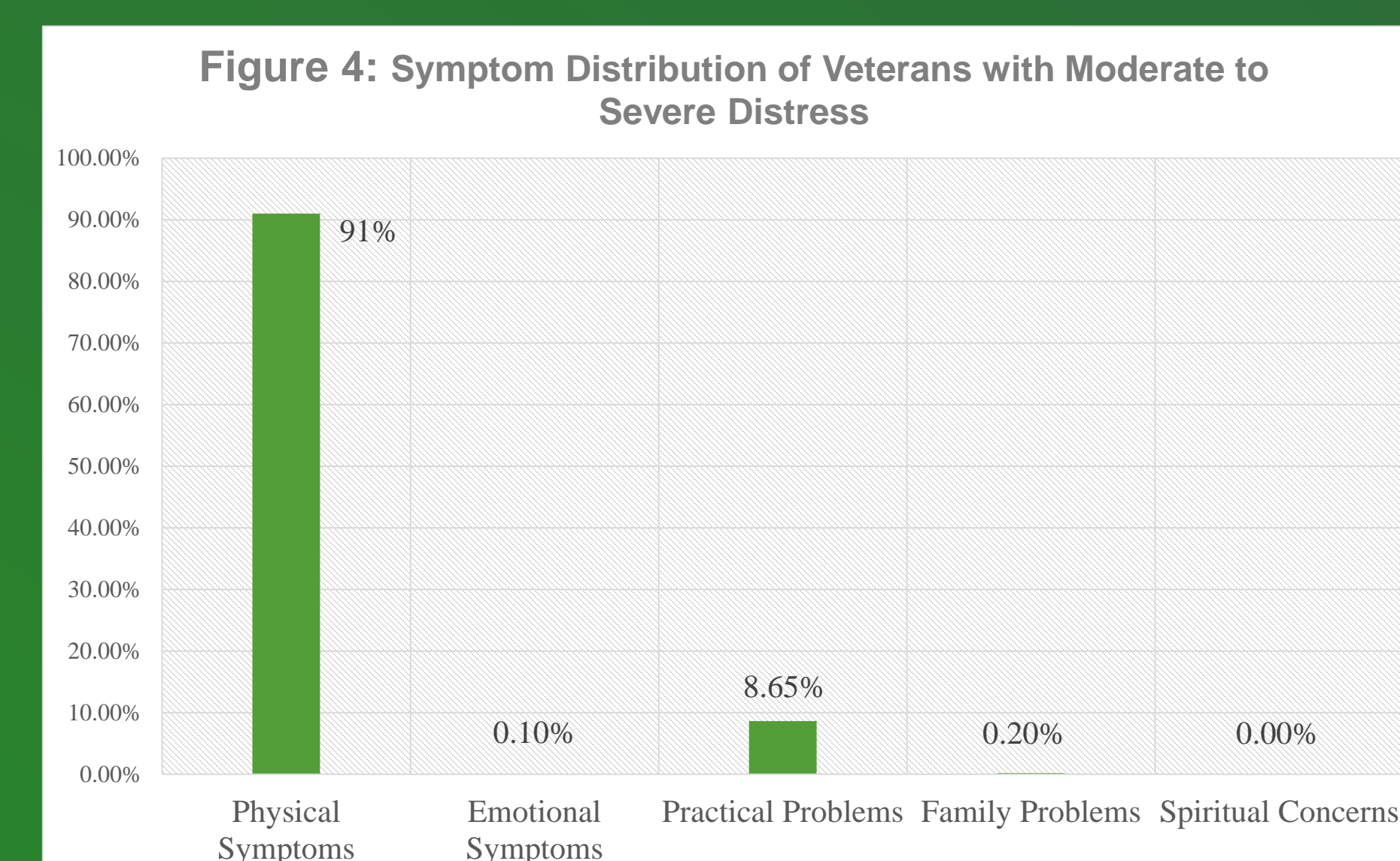
- Figure 3: Distress Screening Algorithm



Family Problems (same as Practical Problems)

January 2017 to September 2017

- 81 veterans were administered the Distress Screener.
- 22 veterans (27.2%) rated his/her distress level between 4 and 10 (moderate to severe levels of distress).



- Figure 4: responses to those reporting moderate to severe distress:

Response	N
Mental Health Consult	2
Social Work Consult	1
Chaplain	0
Others (Travel/Lodging, Dental, Hospice, Tobacco Cessation and Nutrition)	19

Lessons Learned

- Review of the historical data from 2015 to 2016 found that nearly half of surveyed veterans reported moderate to severe distress level, but only 19% of them were referred to appropriate supportive services.
- An algorithm for distress screening was developed in 2016, but it primarily involved oncology staff and was not implemented consistently due to lack of engagement from all stakeholders (social work, mental health, chaplain, etc.).

Next Step

- Identify and study barriers to proper care
- Expand and engage stakeholders to include other services (mental health, social work, traveling, etc.) for process planning

PDSA Cycle 2

- Expand Distress Screen to be conducted at multiple pivotal times to assess the veterans' distress
- Ensure consults are being entered to the appropriate services

Reference

- Grassi L, Spiegel D, Riba M. Advancing psychosocial care in cancer patients. *FI000Research*. 2017;6:2083.
- Rodriguez MA, Tortorella F, St John C. Improving psychosocial care for improved health outcomes. *J Healthcare Qual*. 2010;32:3-12.
- NCCN, Distress Management Guideline