

Amplifying Continuity: Closing the Loop on Orthopedic Patients in the Urgent Care Ecosystem



Vanessa Gamboa, MSHIA, BSN, RN
Nataly C. Ucros, MBA

INTRODUCTION + BACKGROUND

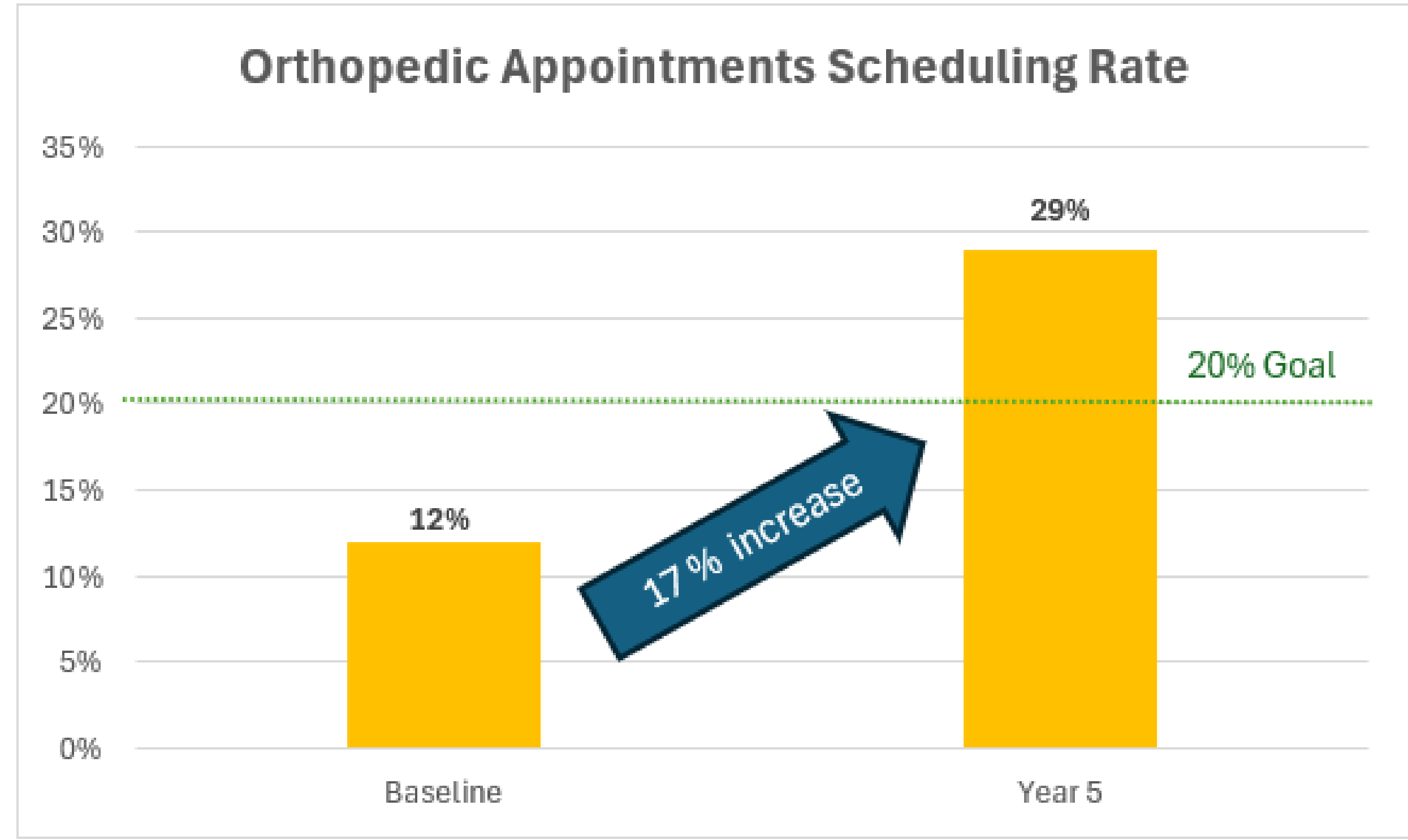
- **Orthopedic conditions = most common specialty referral** from urgent care at **Baptist Health South Florida (~5% of discharges)**
- **Urgent care:** major entry point for **acute musculoskeletal injuries**
- **Prior Referral Challenges**
 - No standardized referral workflow
 - Delayed specialty access
 - Fragmented care transitions
 - Missed follow-up opportunities
- **Quality Improvement Initiative**
 - Care Coordination program implemented to standardize orthopedic referrals
- **Workflow**
 - Discharge: provider selects predefined orthopedic follow-up in EHR
 - Referral automatically activates care coordination
 - Centralized team contacts patients within 48 hours
 - Appointments coordinated with appropriate specialty services
- **Integrated Care Pathway**
 - Orthopedic specialty evaluation
 - Diagnostic imaging
 - Physical therapy
 - Outpatient / inpatient surgery (when needed)
- **Program Goals**
 - Improve follow-up adherence
 - Reduce barriers to specialty care

METHODS + PROCEDURE

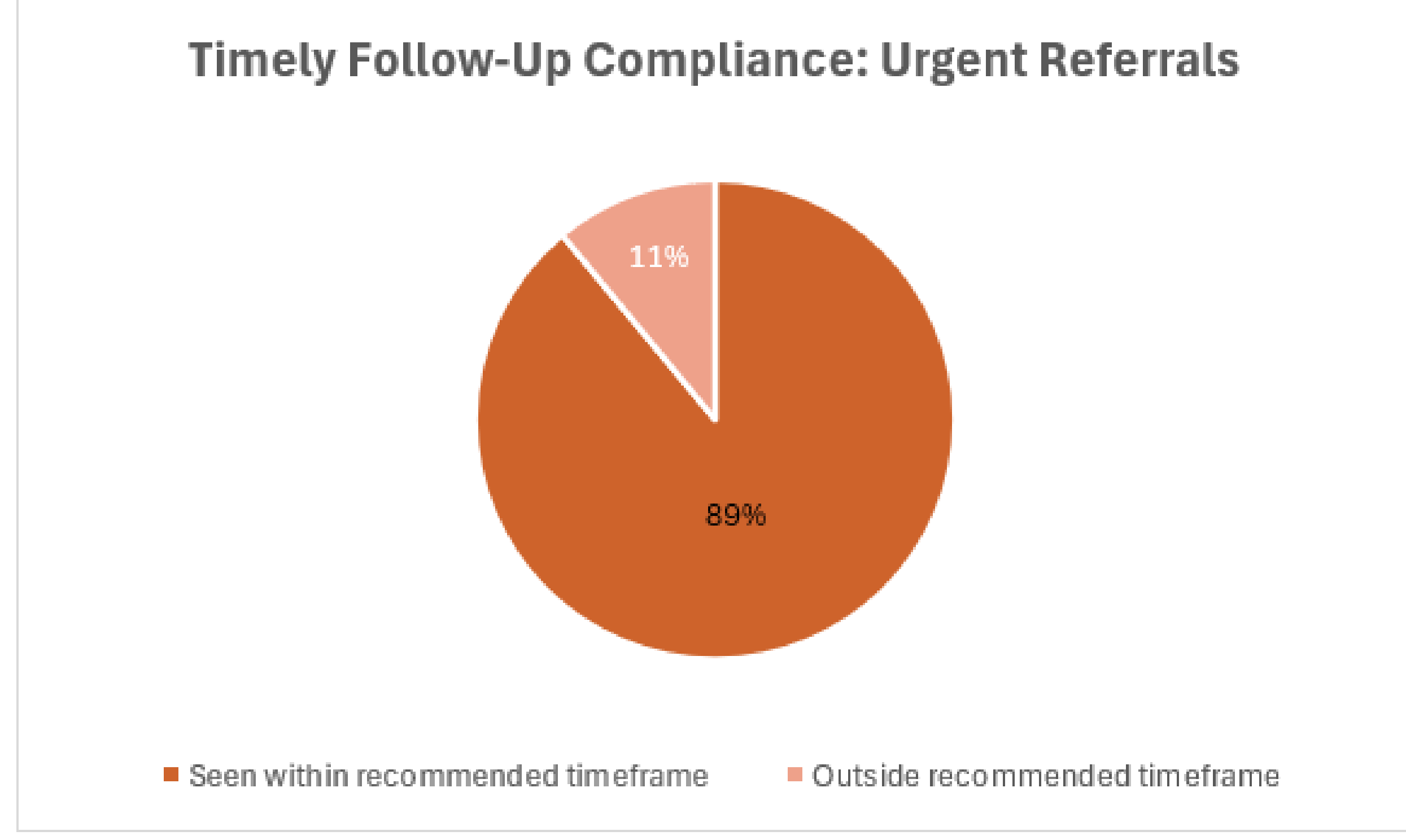
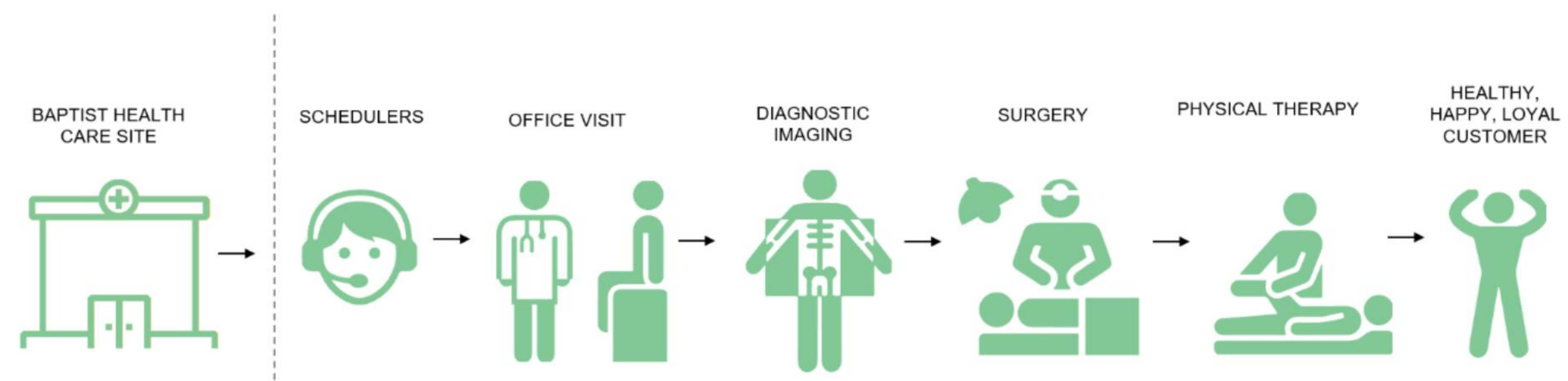
- **Quality Improvement initiative launched October 2020**
- **Expanded to 20+ urgent care centers in South Florida** within **Baptist Health South Florida**
- **Implementation Components**
 - Hard-coded EHR referral options for orthopedic follow-up at discharge
 - Dedicated patient navigation / scheduling team
 - Scheduling team hours aligned with urgent care hours of operations
 - Multi-modal patient outreach: phone call, text message, and email
 - Patient outreach within 48 hours for appointment coordination
 - Protected orthopedic appointment blocks to improve access
- **Performance Monitoring**
 - **Enterprise dashboards track:**
 - Referral volume
 - Scheduling rates
 - Appointment completion
 - Follow-up timeliness
 - Patient engagement
- **Program Targets**
 - 20% orthopedic scheduling rate
 - 70% appointment completion

DATA + RESULTS

- Over a **five-year period**, the orthopedic care coordination program demonstrated measurable improvements in follow-up adherence and specialty access.
- **System Impact**
 - The initiative generated approximately: **170,000 downstream orthopedic-related encounters** Including:
 - Imaging services
 - Physical therapy and rehabilitation
 - Orthopedic specialty visits
 - Surgical consultations
 - These outcomes demonstrate improved **continuity of care and system integration.**



Care Coordination: Facilitating Follow-Up Care



DISCUSSION

- Standardized workflows and centralized navigation improved follow-up adherence.
- Data transparency and monthly stakeholder review enabled continuous process improvement.
- Care coordination models can improve patient outcomes while supporting operational efficiency.

CONCLUSION + TAKE-HOME POINTS

- Standardized referral workflows strengthen care continuity.
- Centralized scheduling improves specialty follow-up rates.
 - Real-time performance dashboards enable rapid improvement.
 - Executive alignment supports long-term sustainability.
 - This model is **scalable and replicable across other specialties and health systems.**

Corresponding authors:
Vanessab@baptisthealth.net
Natalycas@baptistHealth.net