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Addressing Gaps in Care Through a Medical Student-Led Cancer Screening Project

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Addressing Gaps in Care Through a Medical Student-Led Cancer Screening Project

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BACKGROUND

- Colorectal (CRC), breast (BrCa), and cervical cancer are among the most preventable cancers that have demonstrated proven benefit of early screening.
- Despite strong evidence to support the importance of early detection and intervention, noncompliance to screening guidelines remain.
- The implementation of interactive telephone reminders has been shown to increase adherence to cancer screenings.
- Community service learning has been utilized within academic medicine as an effective way to teach clinical skills, advocacy and empathy.
- We developed a medical student-led project involving phone calls to patients within the Rowan-Virtua Department of Family Medicine's Accountable Care Organization (ACO), which includes 5,313 patients.

OBJECTIVES

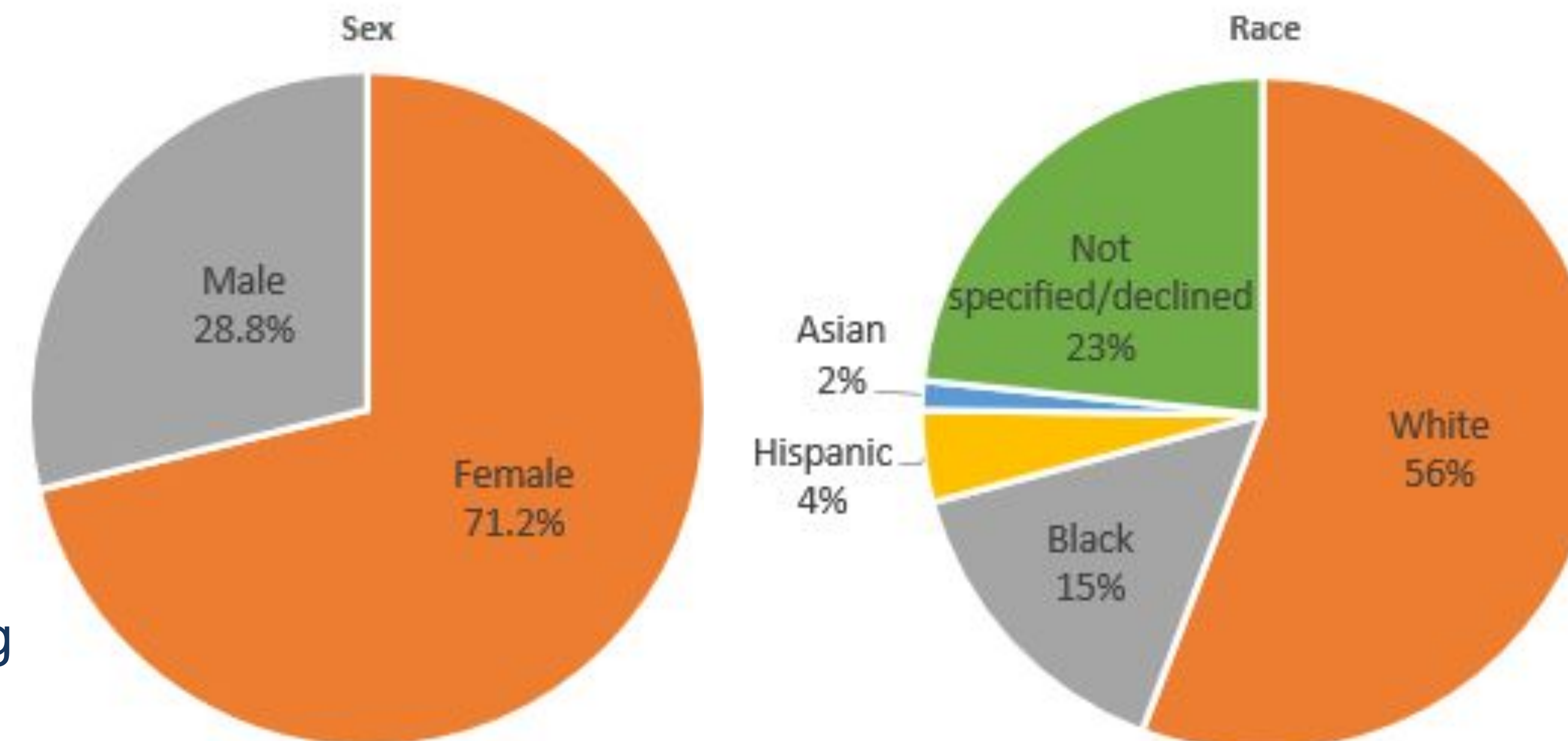
- To assess the efficacy of a medical student-led service-learning project on increasing adherence to colorectal, breast and cervical cancer screening guidelines.

METHODS

- Patients between the ages of 21-75 (n = 735) were identified as due or up-to-date on cancer screenings based on electronic medical chart review.
- Volunteers were trained to contact patients to discuss options for overdue screenings and then place corresponding referrals.
- Screening recommendations were based on United States Preventative Services Task Force (USPSTF) guidelines.
- Patients were contacted between June 2022 and April 2023.
- Patient demographics such as sex, age, and race were collected and recorded.
- Outcome measures for this project included patient eligibility, number of patients reached, number of referrals placed, and number of up-to-date patients.

RESULTS

Figure 1: Patient demographics (n = 735)



- The mean age (sd) was 57.9 (11.5)

Table 2: Outreach outcomes

OUTCOMES		
	N = 643 (87.5%)	N (%)
Total Eligible for phone call		
Due for colorectal cancer screening		472 (64.2)
Due for breast cancer screening		282 (38.4)
Due for cervical cancer screening		313 (42.6)
Patients reached via phone	N = 323 (50.2%)	
Referral/order placed		99 (30.7)
Up to date		75 (23.2)
Declined		149 (46.1)
Referrals Placed		
Colonoscopy		28 (5.9)
Fecal DNA		38 (8.1)
Mammogram		38 (13.5)
Pap smear		30 (9.6)

- Per chart review, 643 (87.5%) patients were determined to be due for at least one cancer screening.
- 323 (50.2%) patients were reached via phone. Among those:
 - **30.7% received a referral for cancer screening**
 - 23.2% reporting being up to date on screenings
 - 46.1% declined screening.
- This intervention **closed care gaps for 12.1% of patients within the ACO**.

CONCLUSIONS

- This student-led medical outreach project was successful in promoting increased adherence to national cancer screening guidelines.
- This project can be used as a framework to establish similar initiatives at other institutions to continue increasing the number of patients screened and close the gap in missed or delayed screenings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- This study was approved by Rowan-Virtua SOM Institutional Review board (PRO-2022-255)

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