

# Quick, call the social worker! A behind-the-scenes look at addressing patients' mental health through a virtual program.

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## Background and Significance

Approximately 30-35% of patients with cancer can experience mental health issues including:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Decreased well-being
- Coping deficits
- Psychosocial stress
- Physical burdens and limitations

**Correlations** between untreated mental health concerns, decreased quality of life, survival, and increased cost of health care.

**Barriers** to mental health support:

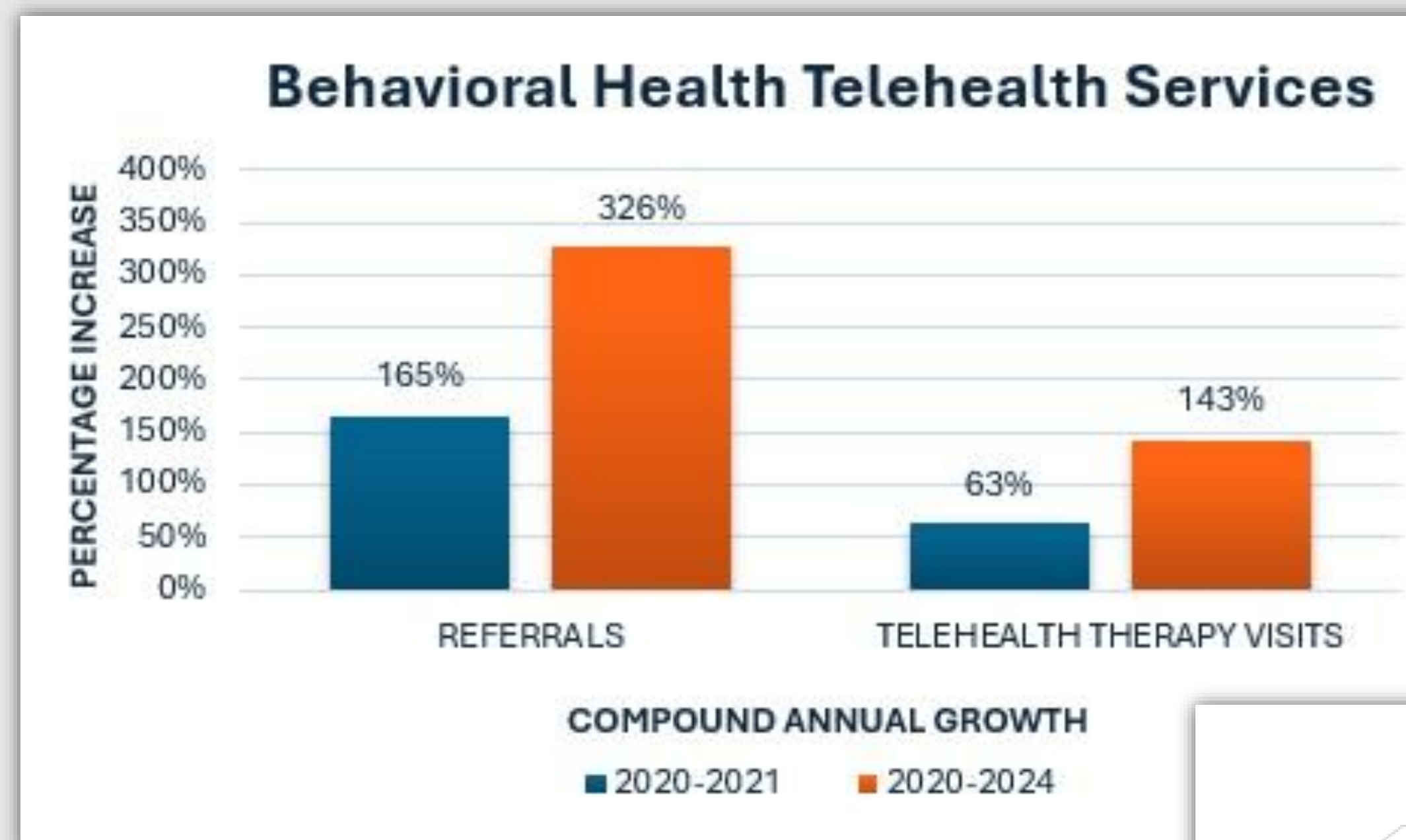
- Mobility
- Transportation
- Delays accessing care
- Immunocompromised status
- Long wait times
- Limited access to mental health providers

**Options:** Telehealth services aid patients in overcoming barriers and are a viable solution to access and participate in mental health care.

## Materials and Method

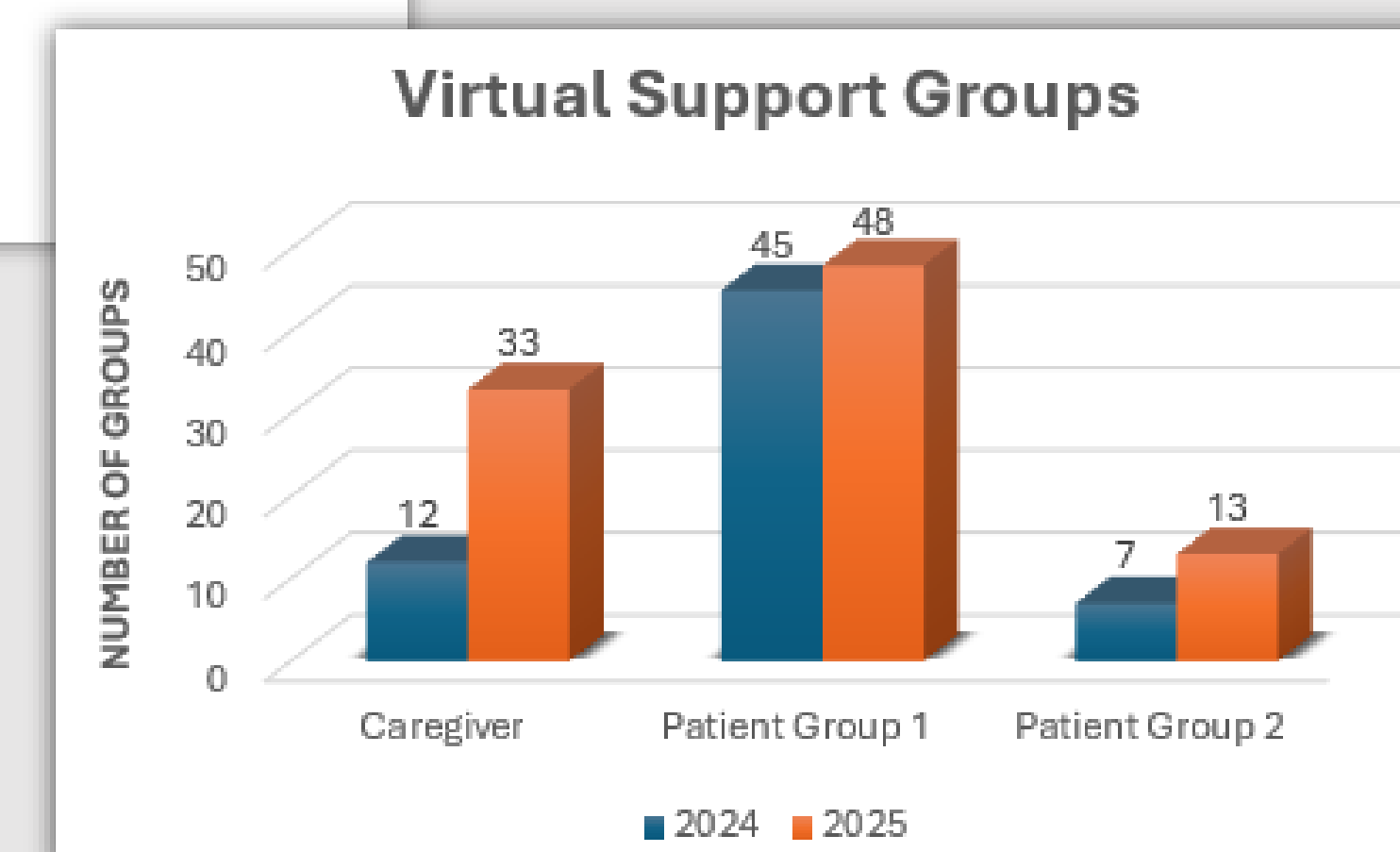
- Virtual Behavioral Health program began in 2020
- Included a team of Licensed Clinical Social Workers providing telehealth psychotherapy for outpatient oncology practices in Florida
- Used a secure HIPAA compliant platform for virtual visits
- Utilized evidenced-based treatments and treatment planning
- Screening Tools: PHQ-9 and GAD-7
- Offered free virtual support groups for patients and caregivers
- Referred to Navigation and Supportive Services teams for resources

## Data Results



✓ Referrals and therapy visits more than doubled over 4 years.

✓ Support groups offered increased over 2 years due to request and participation.



## Discussion

Data collected demonstrates and suggests:

- Interest and demand for mental health services in the oncology setting
- Barriers are conquered
- Virtual behavioral health can positively impact
  - ✓ patient's mental health
  - ✓ quality of life
  - ✓ treatment outcomes

**Limitations** to findings:

- revisions to data collection process
- staff changes
- service-knowledge gaps
- insurance obstacles

## Summary / Conclusion

Findings indicate virtual behavioral health services in outpatient oncology practices to be a thoughtful, compassionate, and viable solution to address the mental health needs of oncology patients.

## Acknowledgements

