

Management of Psychiatric Disorders in Patients with Cancer

2025 Annual Update in Psychiatry

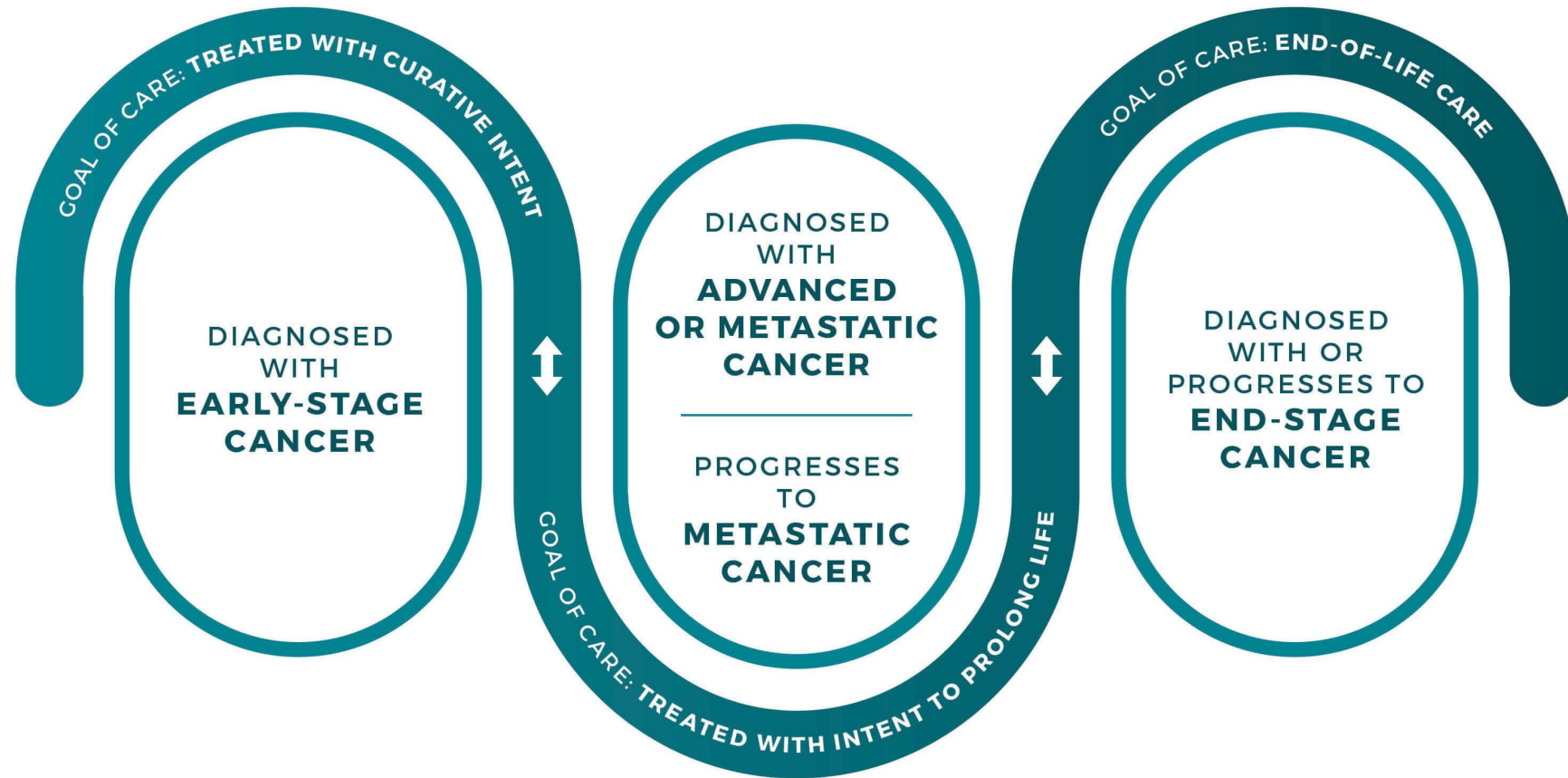
June 6, 2025

Evan Graboyes, MD, MPH
Stacey Maurer, PhD



Hollings Cancer Center
An NCI-Designated Cancer Center

Who is a Cancer Survivor



The Need for Survivorship Research

“Despite the success on the treatment front, we have done very little in a concerted and well-planned fashion to investigate and address the problems of survivors. It is as if we have invented sophisticated techniques to save people from drowning, but once they have been pulled from the water, we leave them on the dock to cough and splutter on their own in the belief that we have done all that we can.”

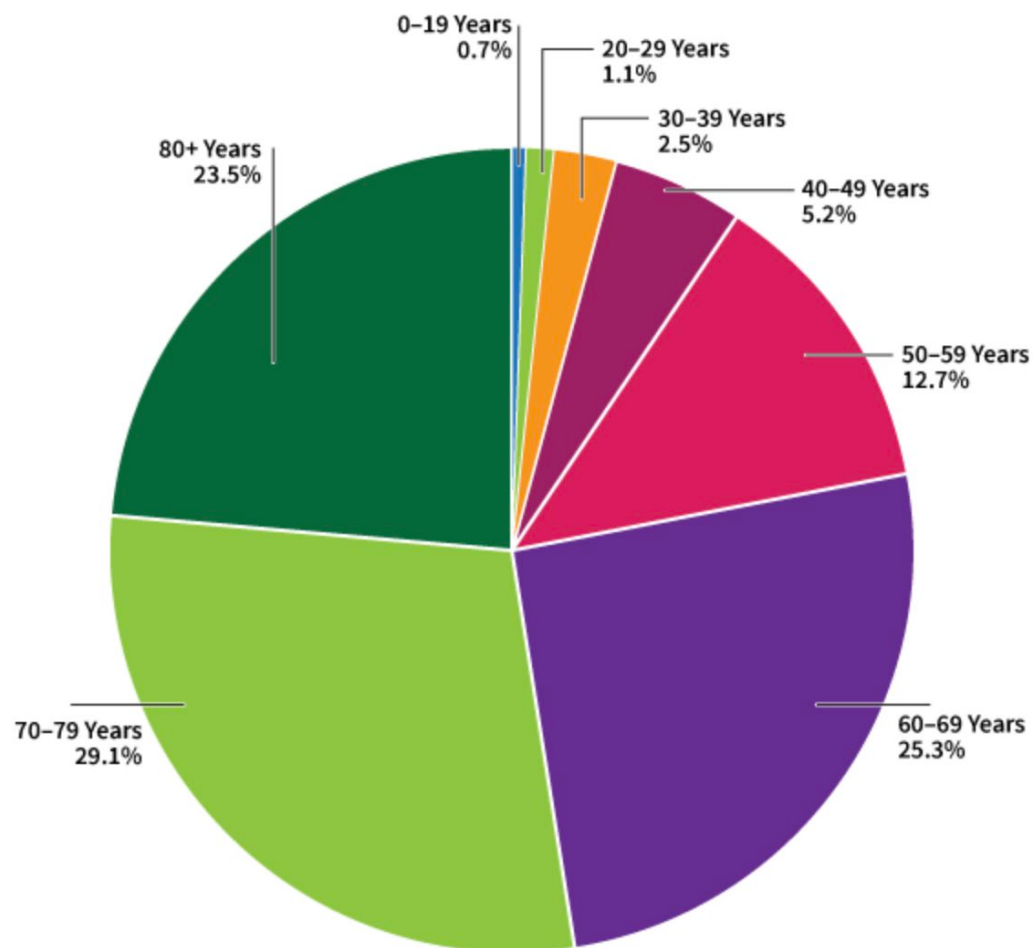


Dr. Fitzhugh Mullan

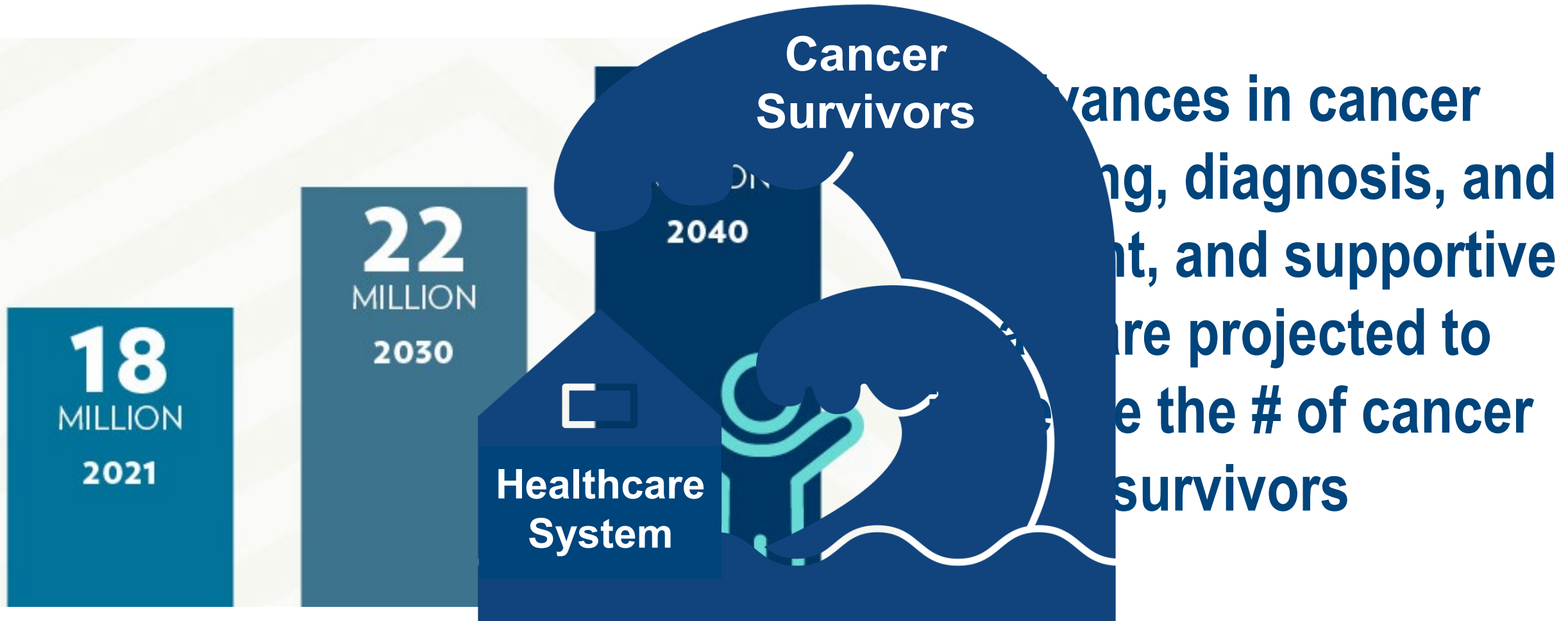
Who is a Cancer Survivor



An Aging Population of Cancer Survivors



A Survivor Tsunami



Comprehensive Survivorship Care



Mental Health Concerns Among Cancer Survivors

- Distress
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Trauma/PTSD
- Fear of Cancer Recurrence/Progression
- Body Image distress
- Suicide



Screening

- Screening for anxiety, depression, trauma, and distress should be a part of routine care using validated measures
 - Distress (DT Thermometer)
 - Depression: PHQ 2/9 (or PROMIS)
 - Anxiety: GAD-7 (or PROMIS)
 - Trauma: PC-PTSD-5



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Psychosocial Distress

- Distress: multifactorial unpleasant emotional experience of a psychological (ie, cognitive, behavioral, emotional), social, spiritual, and/or physical nature that may interfere with the ability to cope effectively with cancer, its physical symptoms, and its treatment.



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CoC Psychosocial Distress Screening

- Cancer programs must implement a policy and procedure for psychosocial distress screening for patients with cancer
- Goal: (1) ID psychological, social, financial, behavioral issues that interfere with treatment plan and adversely affect treatment outcomes and (2) link them to appropriate resources and referrals
- Timing: $\geq$ 1x during first course of treatment (add'l screening at program discretion)



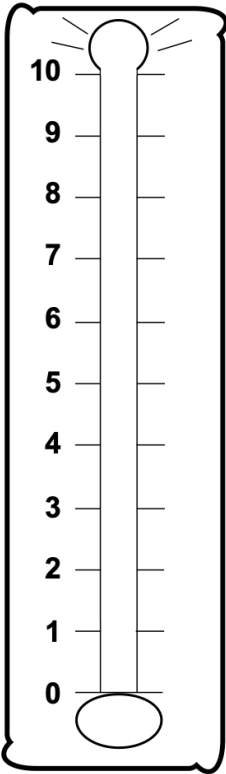
NCCN Distress Thermometer

NCCN DISTRESS THERMOMETER

Distress is an unpleasant experience of a mental, physical, social, or spiritual nature. It can affect the way you think, feel, or act. Distress may make it harder to cope with having cancer, its symptoms, or its treatment.

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



No distress

PROBLEM LIST

Have you had concerns about any of the items below in the past week, including today? (Mark all that apply)

Physical Concerns

- ☐ Pain
- ☐ Sleep
- ☐ Fatigue
- ☐ Tobacco use
- ☐ Substance use
- ☐ Memory or concentration
- ☐ Sexual health
- ☐ Changes in eating
- ☐ Loss or change of physical abilities

Emotional Concerns

- ☐ Worry or anxiety
- ☐ Sadness or depression
- ☐ Loss of interest or enjoyment
- ☐ Grief or loss
- ☐ Fear
- ☐ Loneliness
- ☐ Anger
- ☐ Changes in appearance
- ☐ Feelings of worthlessness or being a burden

Social Concerns

- ☐ Relationship with spouse or partner
- ☐ Relationship with children
- ☐ Relationship with family members
- ☐ Relationship with friends or coworkers
- ☐ Communication with health care team
- ☐ Ability to have children
- ☐ Prejudice or discrimination

Practical Concerns

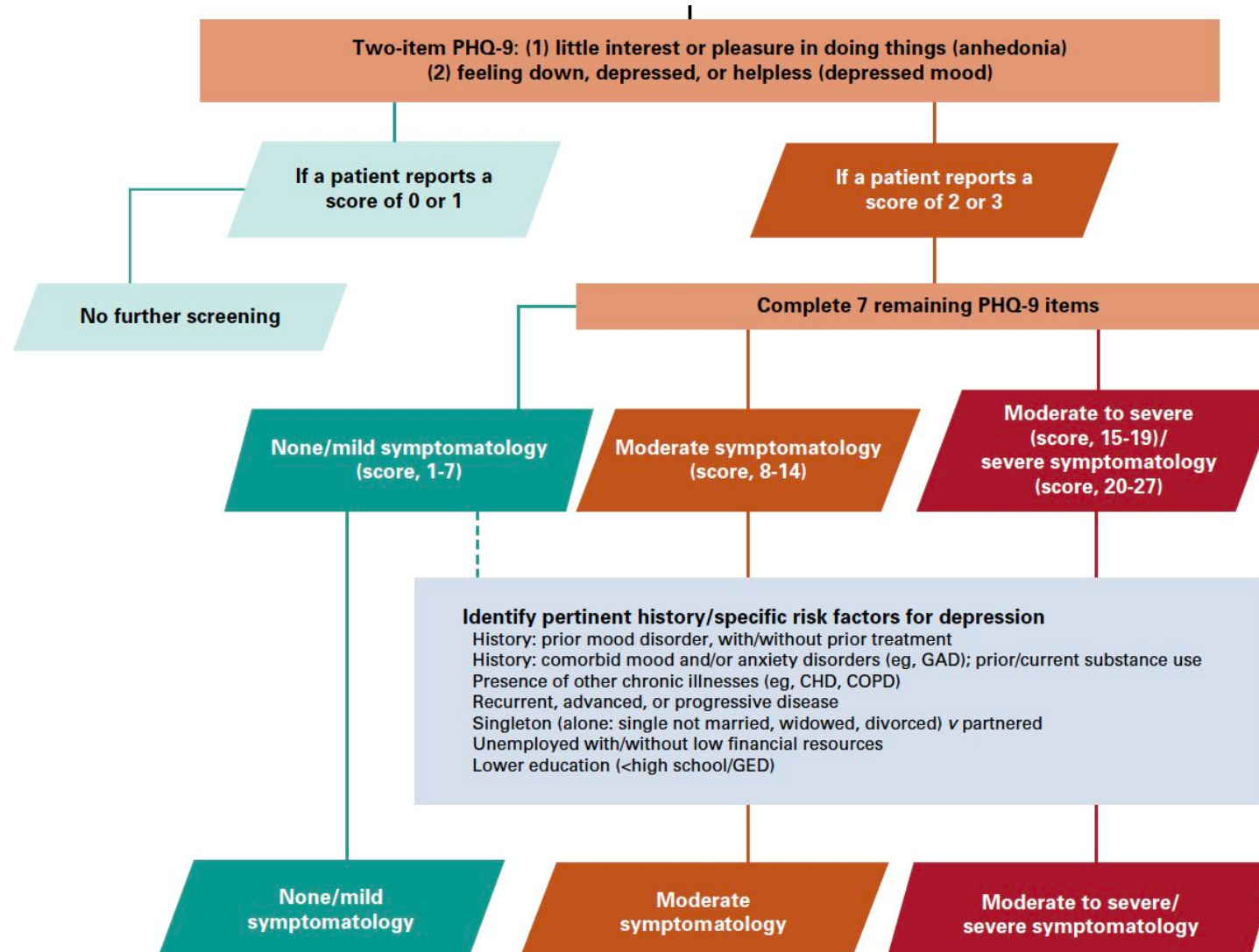
- ☐ Taking care of myself
- ☐ Taking care of others
- ☐ Safety
- ☐ Work
- ☐ School
- ☐ Housing/Utilities
- ☐ Finances
- ☐ Insurance
- ☐ Transportation
- ☐ Child care
- ☐ Having enough food
- ☐ Access to medicine
- ☐ Treatment decisions

Spiritual or Religious Concerns

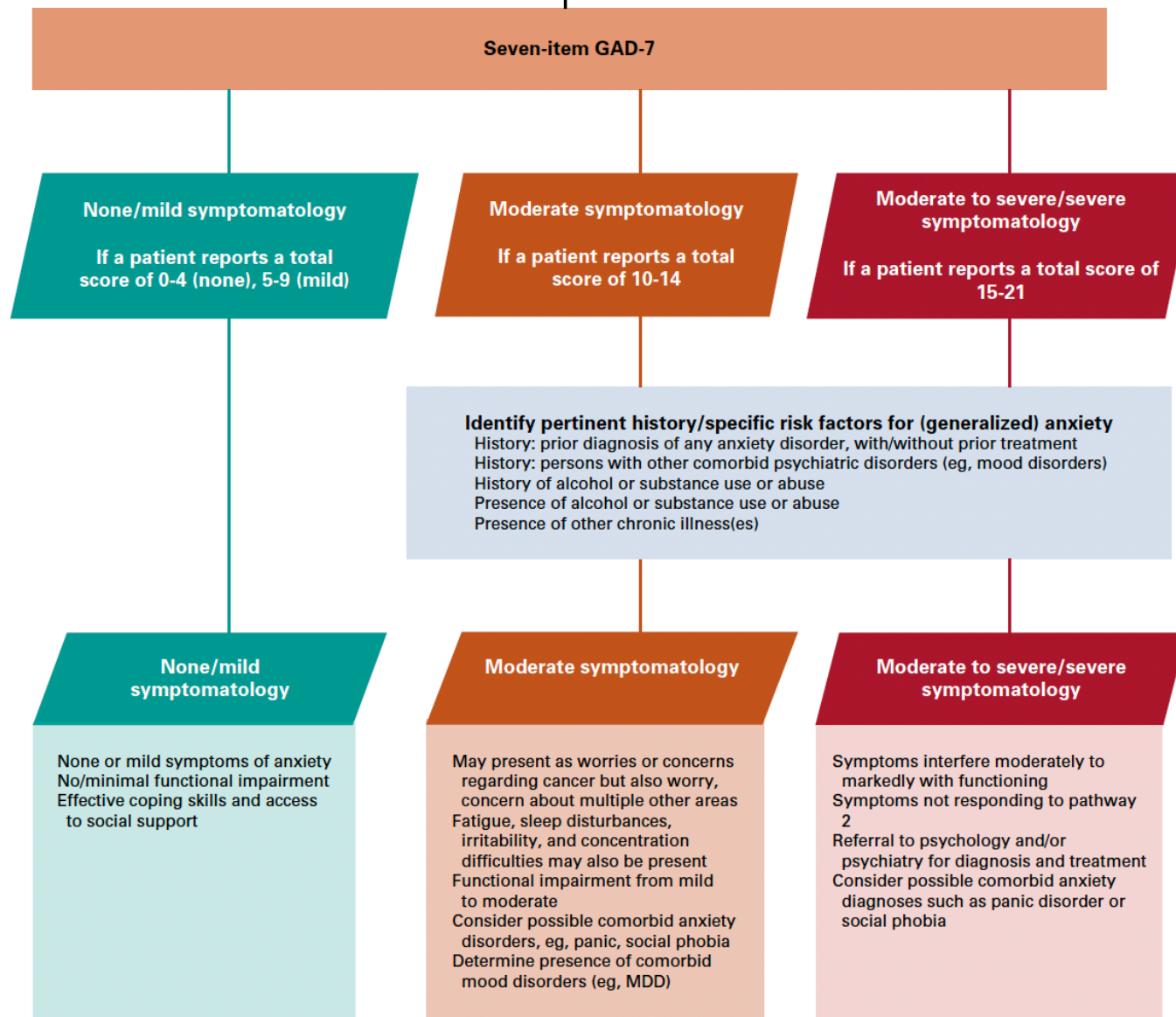
- ☐ Sense of meaning or purpose
- ☐ Changes in faith or beliefs
- ☐ Death, dying, or afterlife
- ☐ Conflict between beliefs and cancer treatments
- ☐ Relationship with the sacred
- ☐ Ritual or dietary needs

Other Concerns:

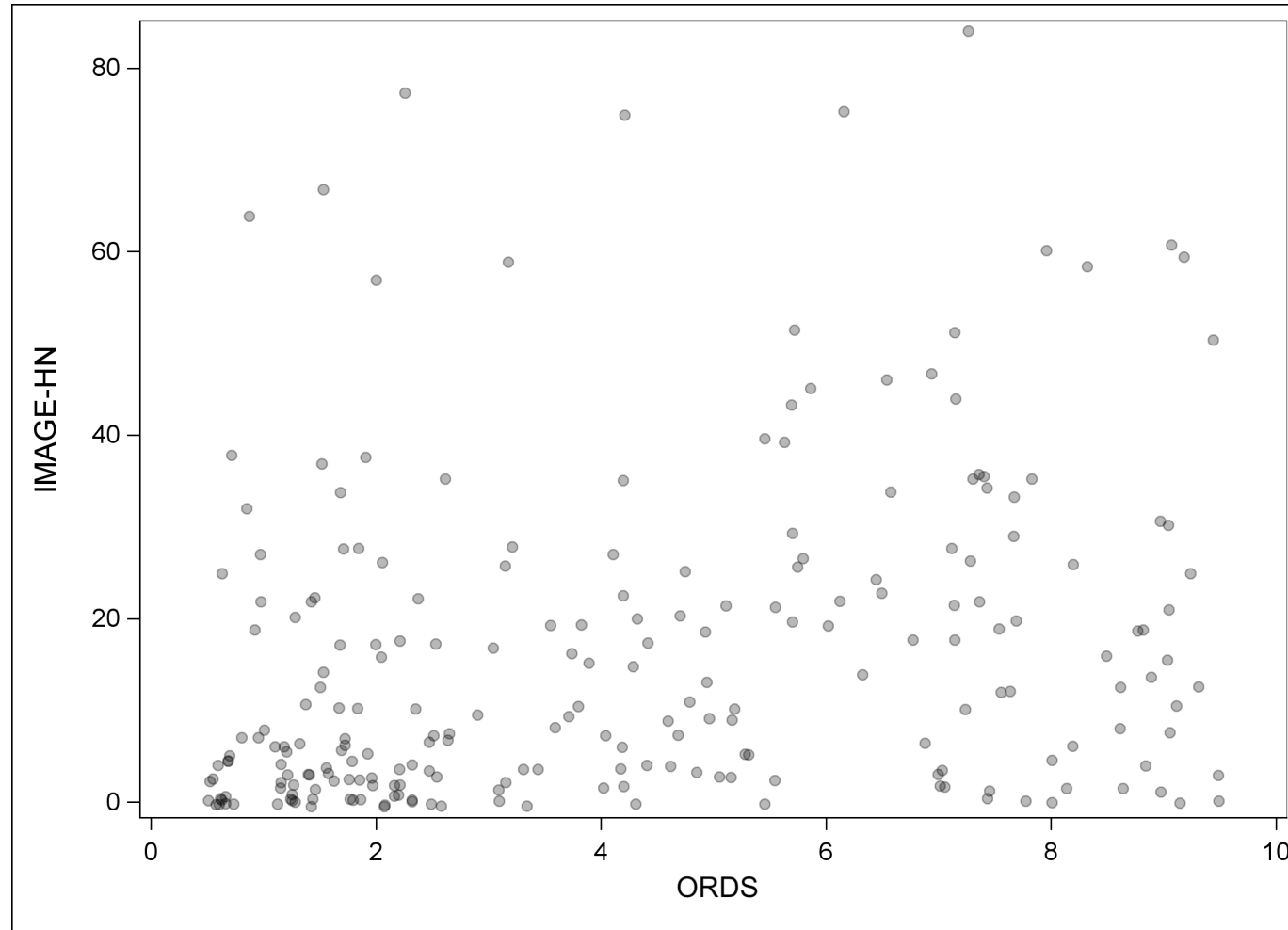
ASCO Depression Screening



ASCO Anxiety Screening



Screening for Body Image Distress



Macias et al. JAMA-OtoHNS. 2022



Effect of a Community-Based Medical Oncology Depression Screening Program on Behavioral Health Referrals Among Patients With Breast Cancer

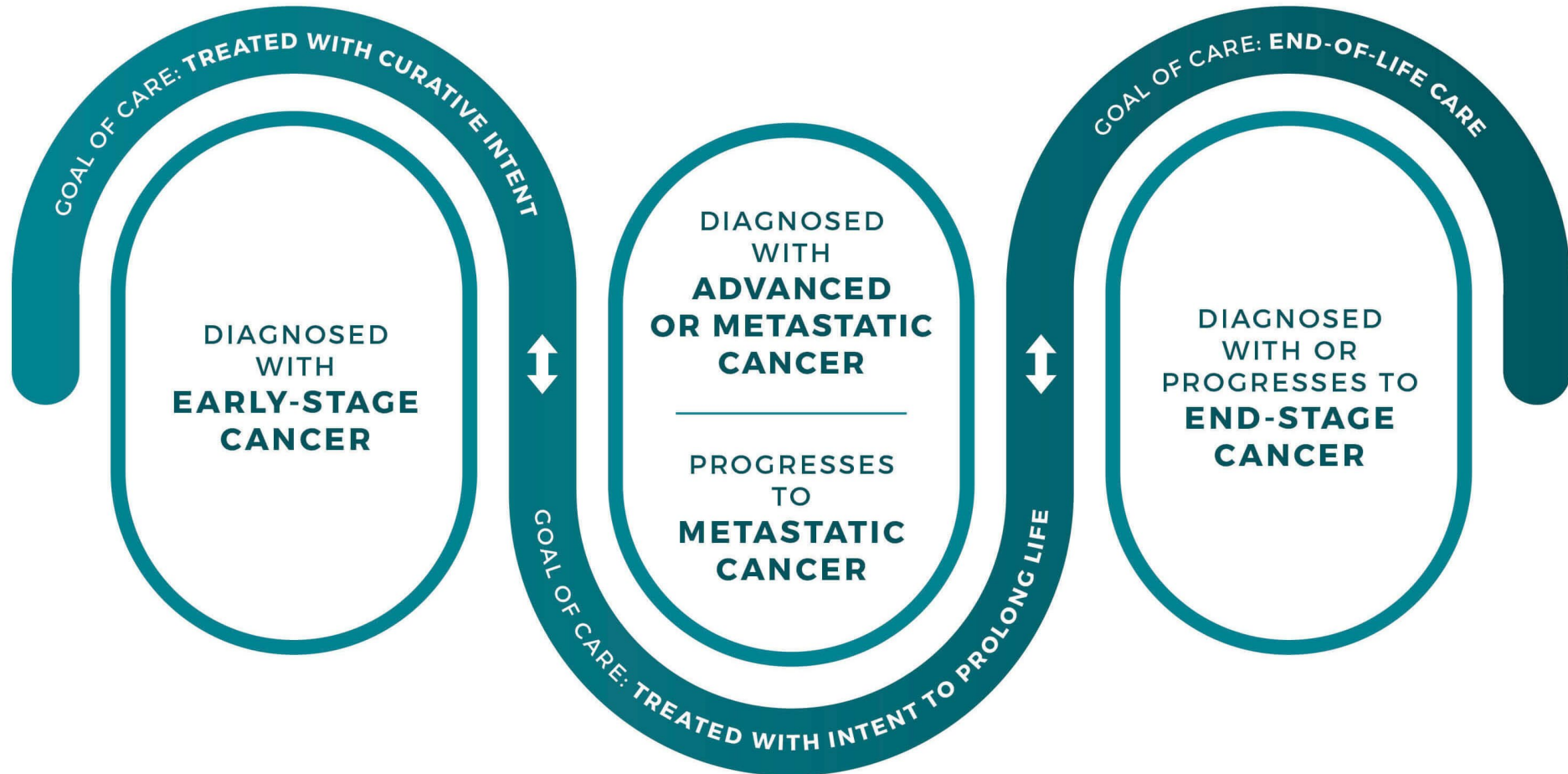
A Randomized Clinical Trial

Table 2. Percent of Eligible Participants Screened and Referred (Based on 9-Item Patient Health Questionnaire Score) at Tailored Intervention vs Education-Only Sites

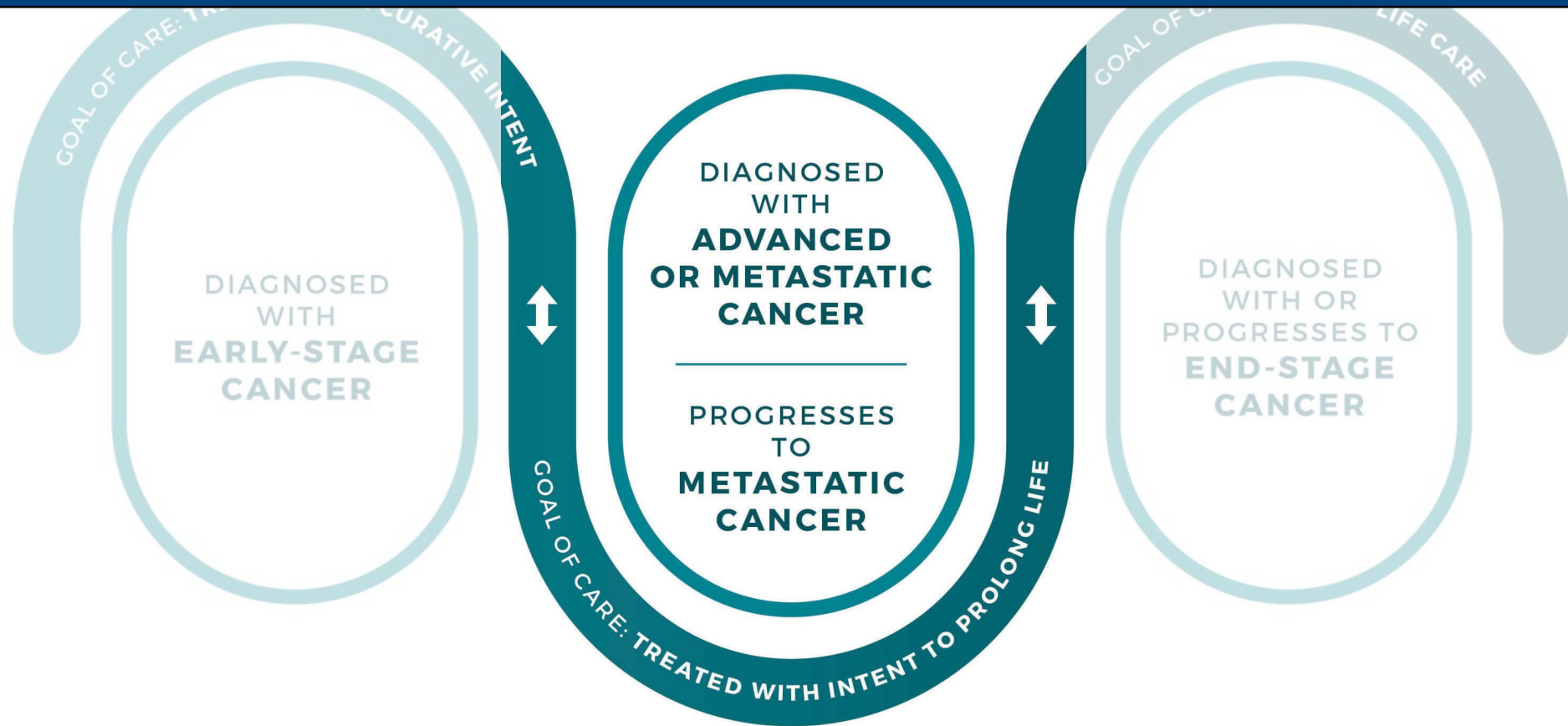
Primary outcome	Tailored intervention sites (n = 744)	Education-only sites (n = 692)	Risk difference (95% CI)
Received a referral to behavioral health services, No. (%)	59 (0.079)	1 (0.001)	0.078 (0.058-0.097)
PHQ-9 score distribution (% based on No. screened) ^a			
Low	533 (89)	2 (67)	
Moderate	57 (10)	1 (33)	
High	6 (1)	0	

Macias et al. JAMA-OtoHNS. 2022

Survivorship Continuum



With treatment advances, the subpopulation of cancer survivors living with likely incurable cancer is quickly growing.



Depression is a Critical Concern for Individuals Living with Likely Incurable Cancer



Up to half of all individuals living with likely incurable cancer suffer from depression.



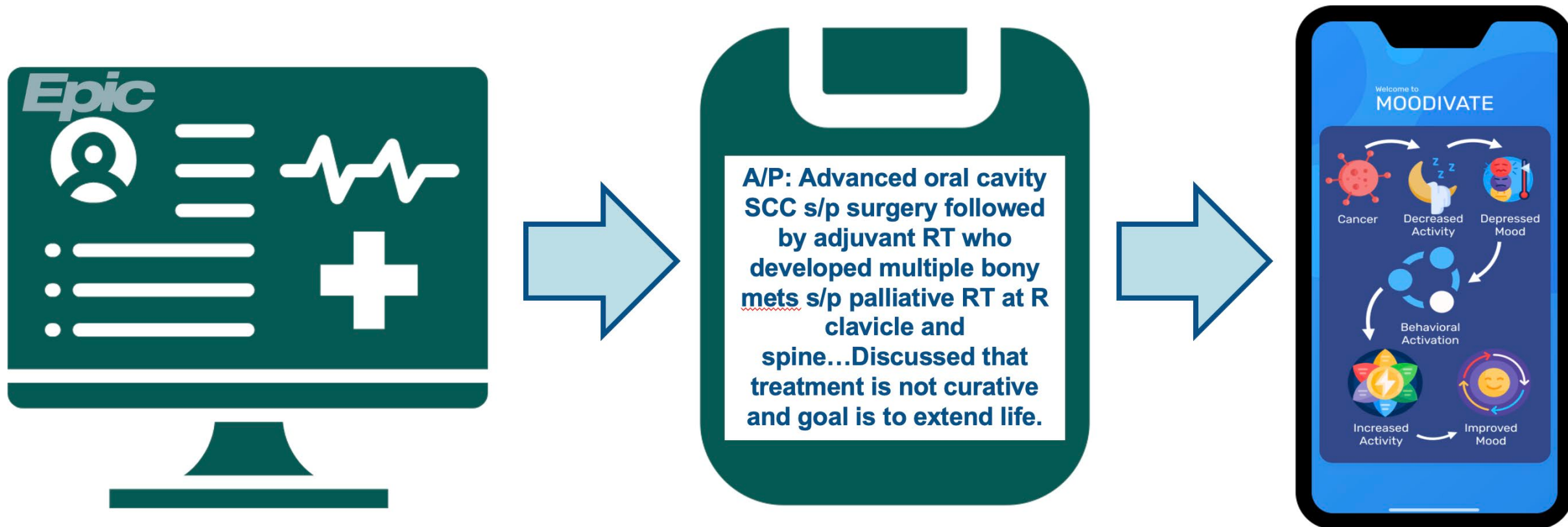
Depression leads to lower quality of life, reduced adherence to anti-cancer therapies, and suicide.



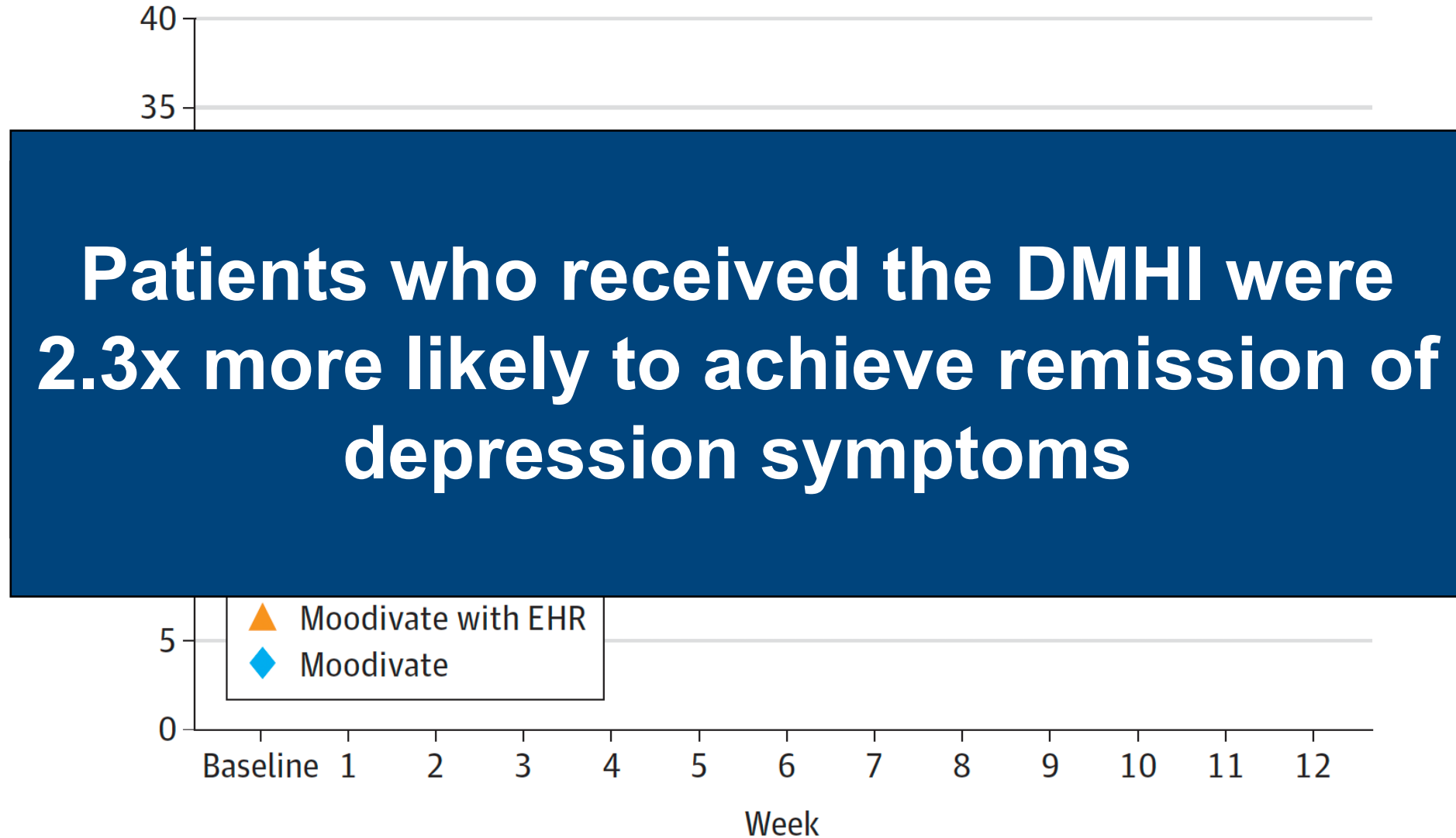
These survivors need feasible, accessible evidence-based depression treatment options.



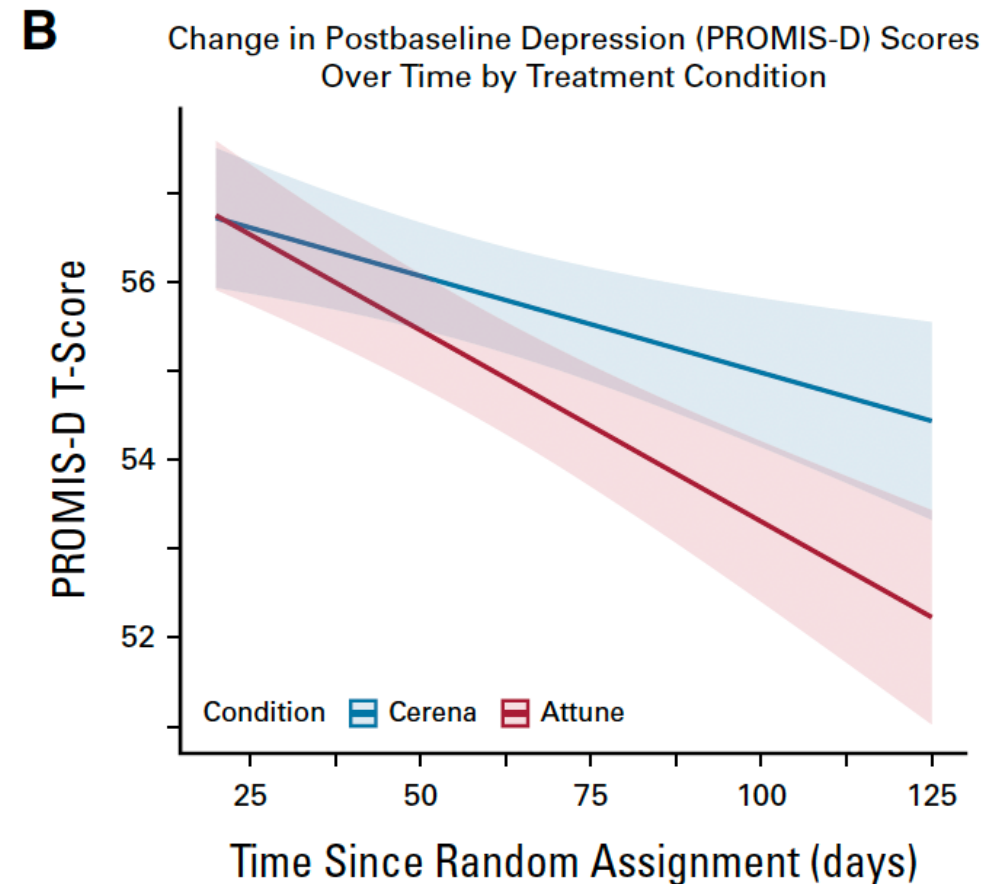
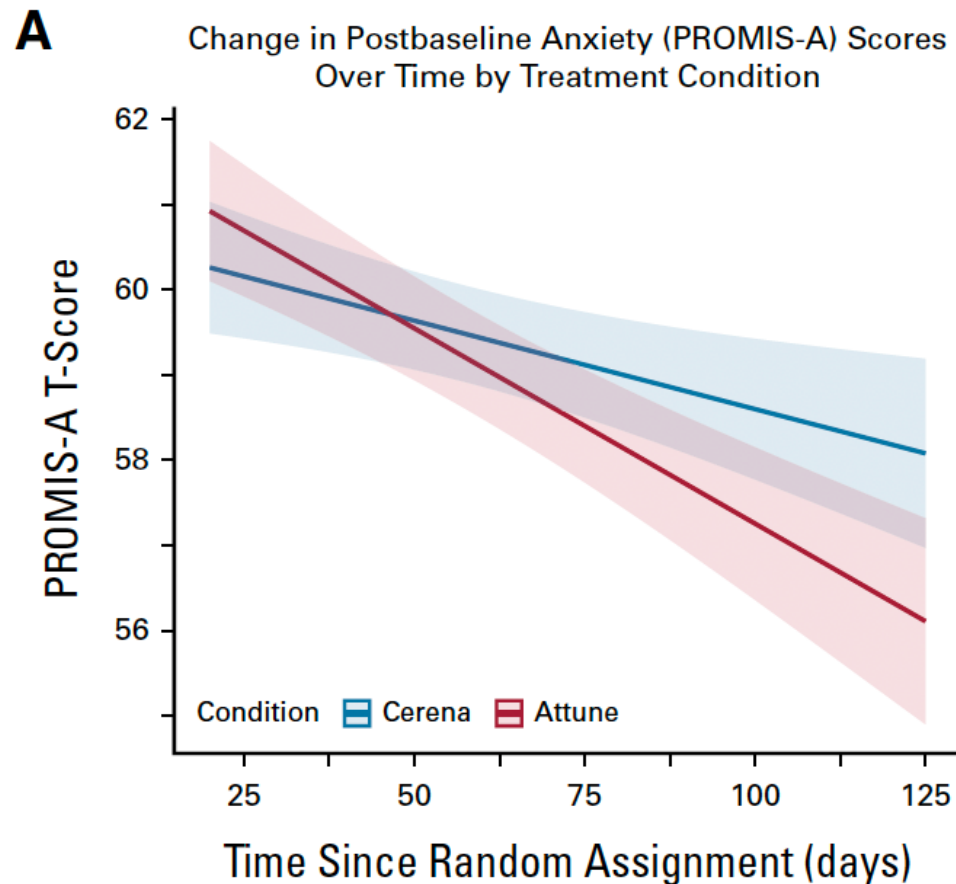
Proactive ID + DMHI Treatment Paradigm



Proactive ID + DMHI Treatment Paradigm

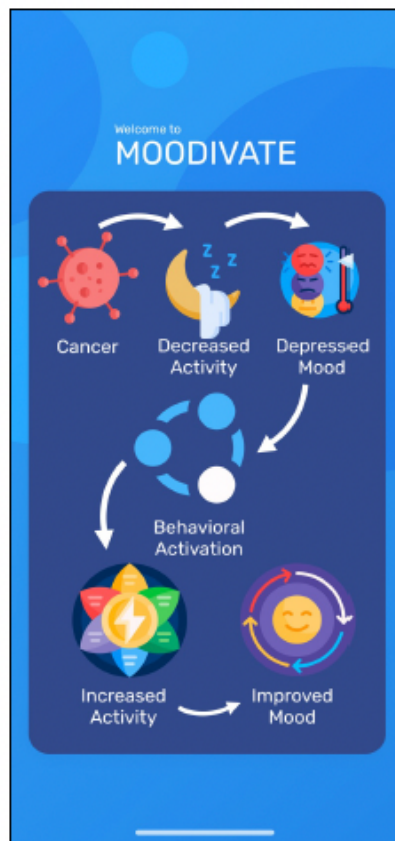
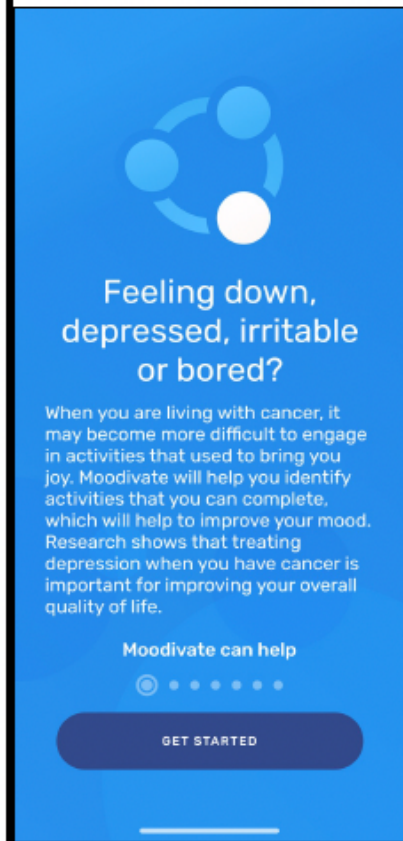


Effects of a Cognitive Behavioral Digital Therapeutic on Anxiety and Depression Symptoms in Patients With Cancer: A Randomized Controlled Trial

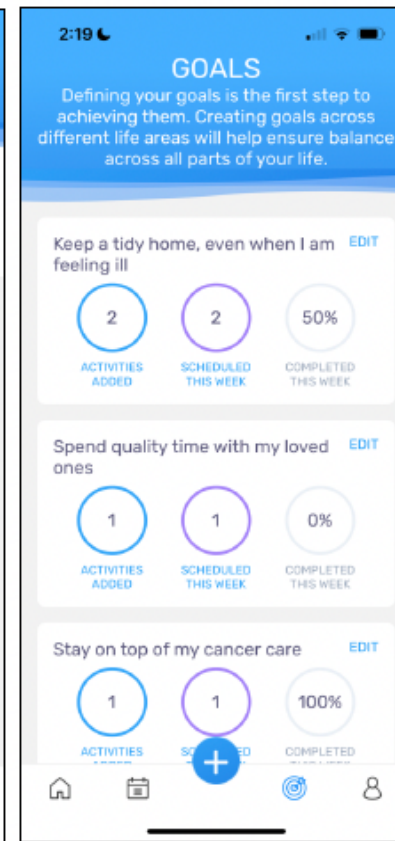
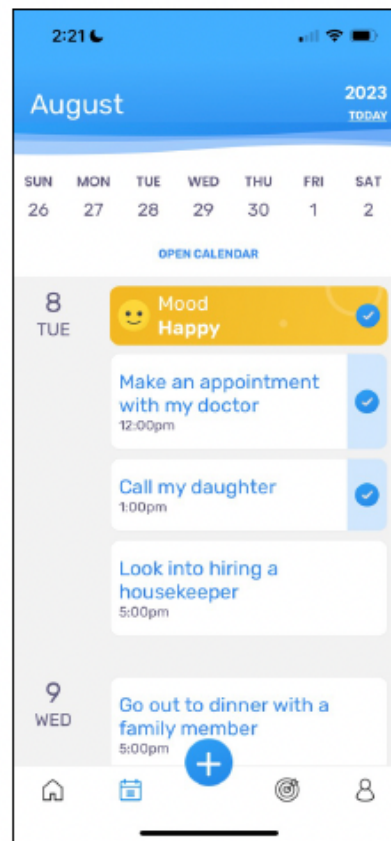
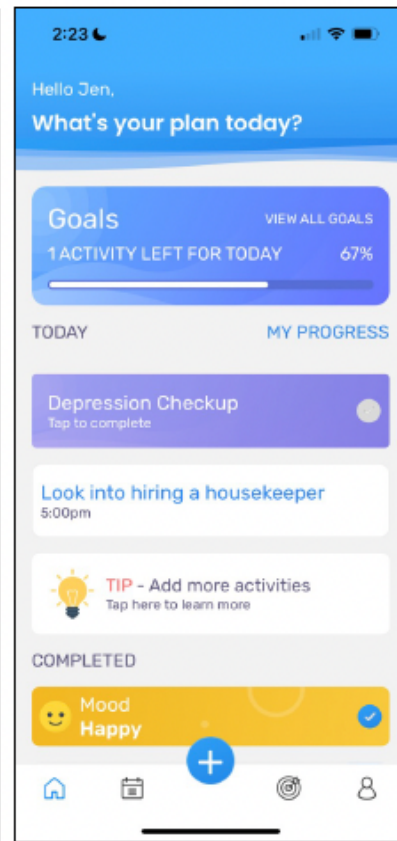


Tailor Moodivate to Unique Survivor Needs

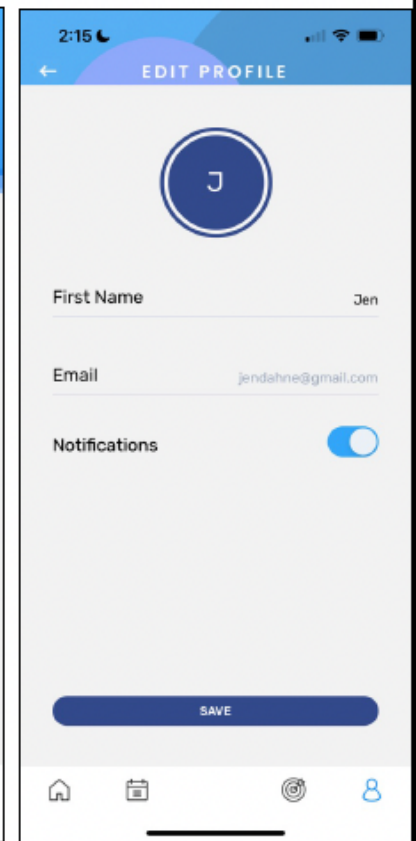
Customized psychoeducational tutorial to describe the relationship between cancer and depression and how BA will help.



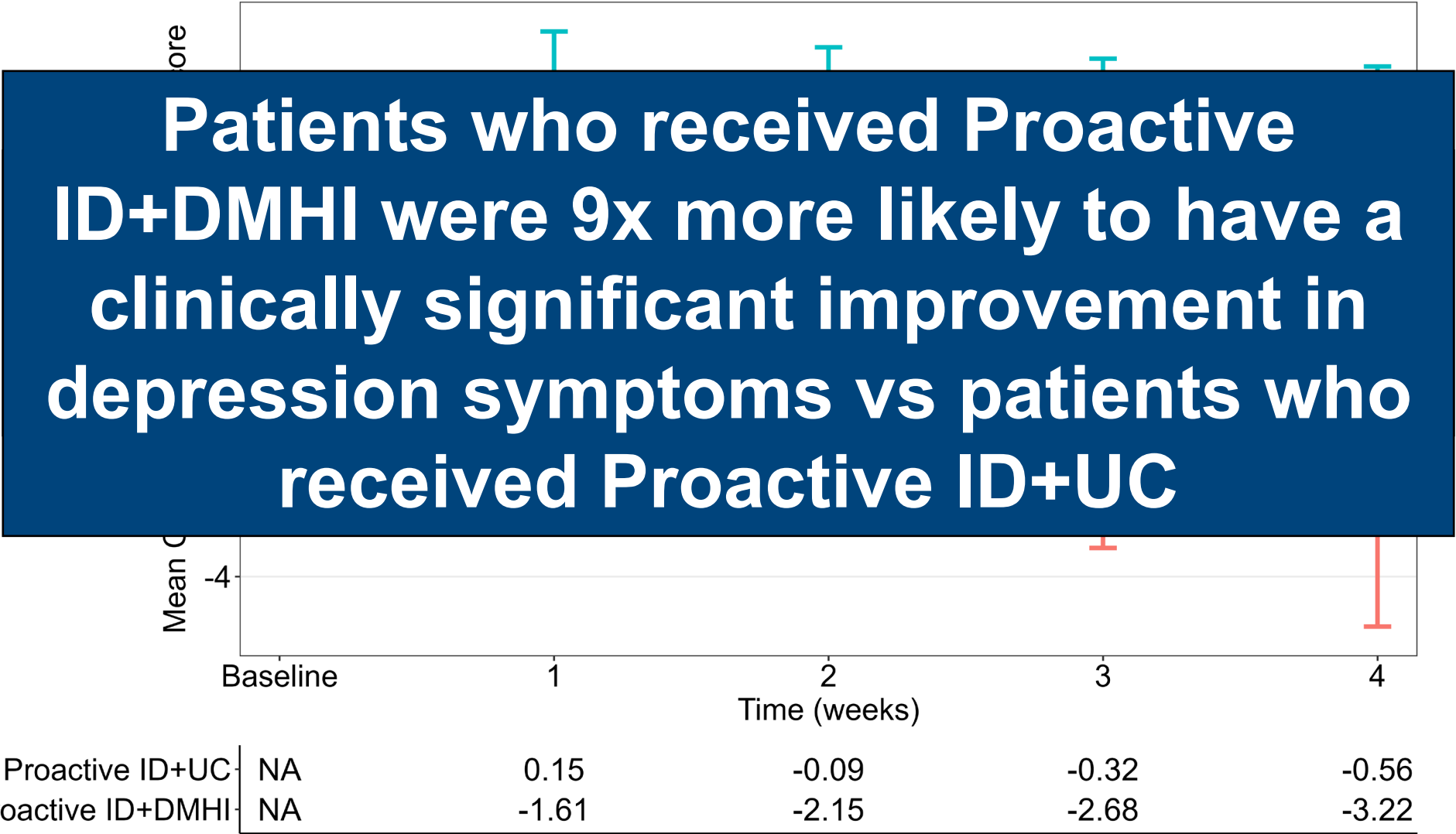
Provided example goals and activities that a user can select (or they can create their own) that are relevant to ILLIC. These goals and activities were solicited from interview participants.



Added push notifications for scheduled activities.



Proactive ID + DMHI May Decrease Depressive Symptoms



Wrap it up

- Mental health disorders are prevalent and significant among cancer survivors
- Screening remains a major challenge
- Multilevel barriers limit referrals and access
- Subsets of survivors have unique mental health needs
- Novel care delivery approaches being explored

