

# The Effectiveness of Protecting Time for Mental Health Care in Residency: Using a Validated Tool to Measure the Effect on Stigma



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## Introduction

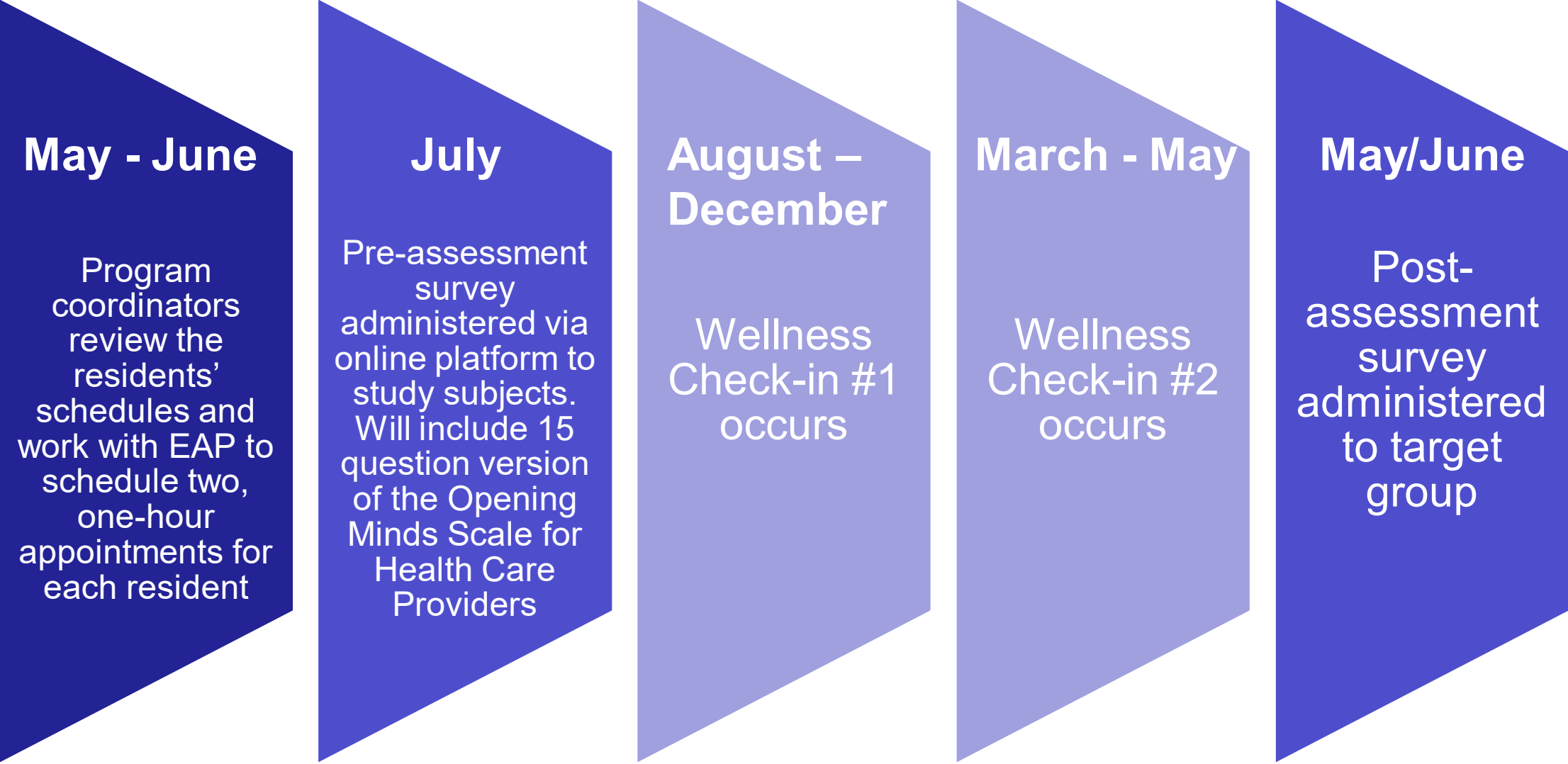
Physician rates of depression and suicide remain alarmingly high<sup>1,2</sup>. At the same time, physicians are less likely to seek help for mental health concerns<sup>3</sup>. The barriers to seeking mental health support include time, access, fear of licensure issues, and stigma towards accessing mental health resources. Rates of burnout and depression are particularly high in trainees. Previous examples have shown that psychological counseling sessions are among the most valued components of well-established programs<sup>4</sup>. In this study, trainees have protected time to meet with mental health professionals thereby removing the barriers of time and access and aiming to reduce the stigma towards mental health care.

## Learning Objectives

The goal of this quality improvement study is to implement a well-being assessment for a cohort of residents in order to improve their likelihood of using mental health services provided by the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and decrease the stigma towards mental health.

- The specific aims are:
- 1.) To increase the rate of initial utilization of the services provided by the EAP
  - 2.) To assess subsequent follow-up appointments with the EAP
  - 3.) To assess resident/fellow attitudes towards mental illness using the “Opening Minds Stigma Scale for Health Care Providers”.

## Methods



## Opening Minds Stigma Scale for Health Care Providers

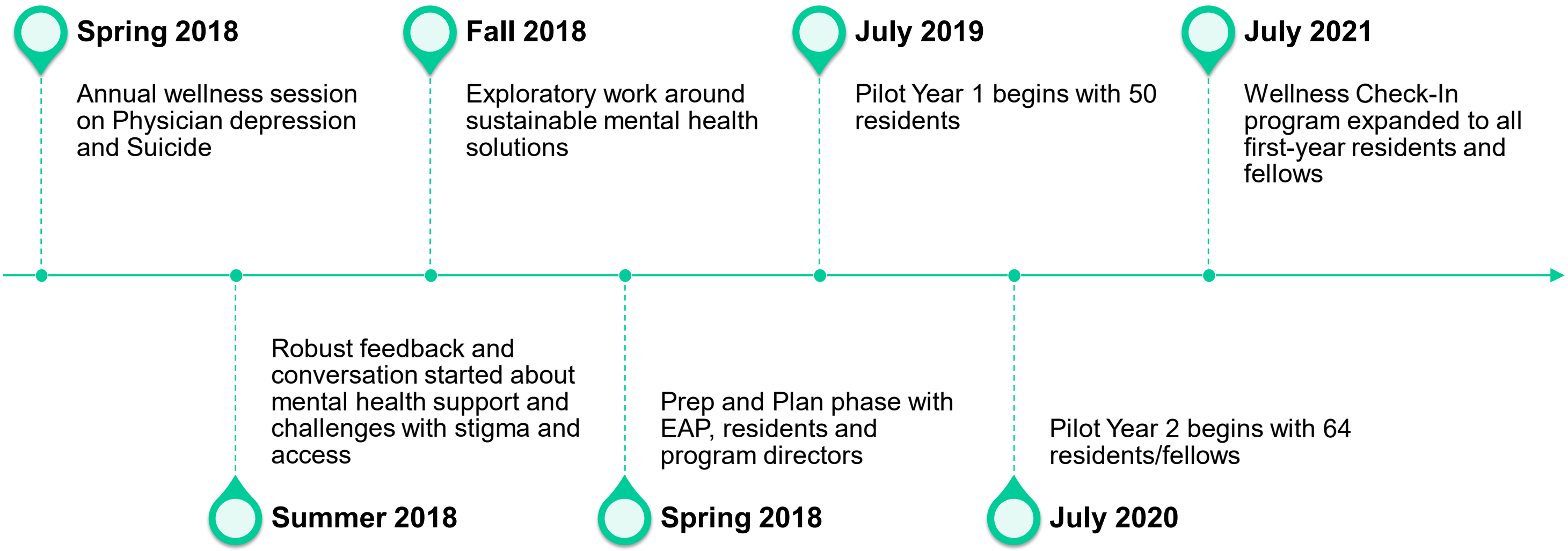
**Total OMS-HC 15 mean score**  
Total scale scores range from 15 to 75; lower score indicates less stigma

**Subscales:**

1. **Attitudes** of health care providers towards people with mental illness (5 items = 1, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15)
2. Attitudes of health care providers towards **disclosure and help-seeking**
3. Attitudes of health care providers towards **social distance** (5 items = 2, 6, 7, 12, 14 related to a willingness to readily engage persons with mental illness in various activities and relationships)

Protecting time for residents to meet with a mental health professional is an effective way to reduce the barriers of time and access. More research is needed to determine if this approach decreases stigma towards mental health.

## Program Development

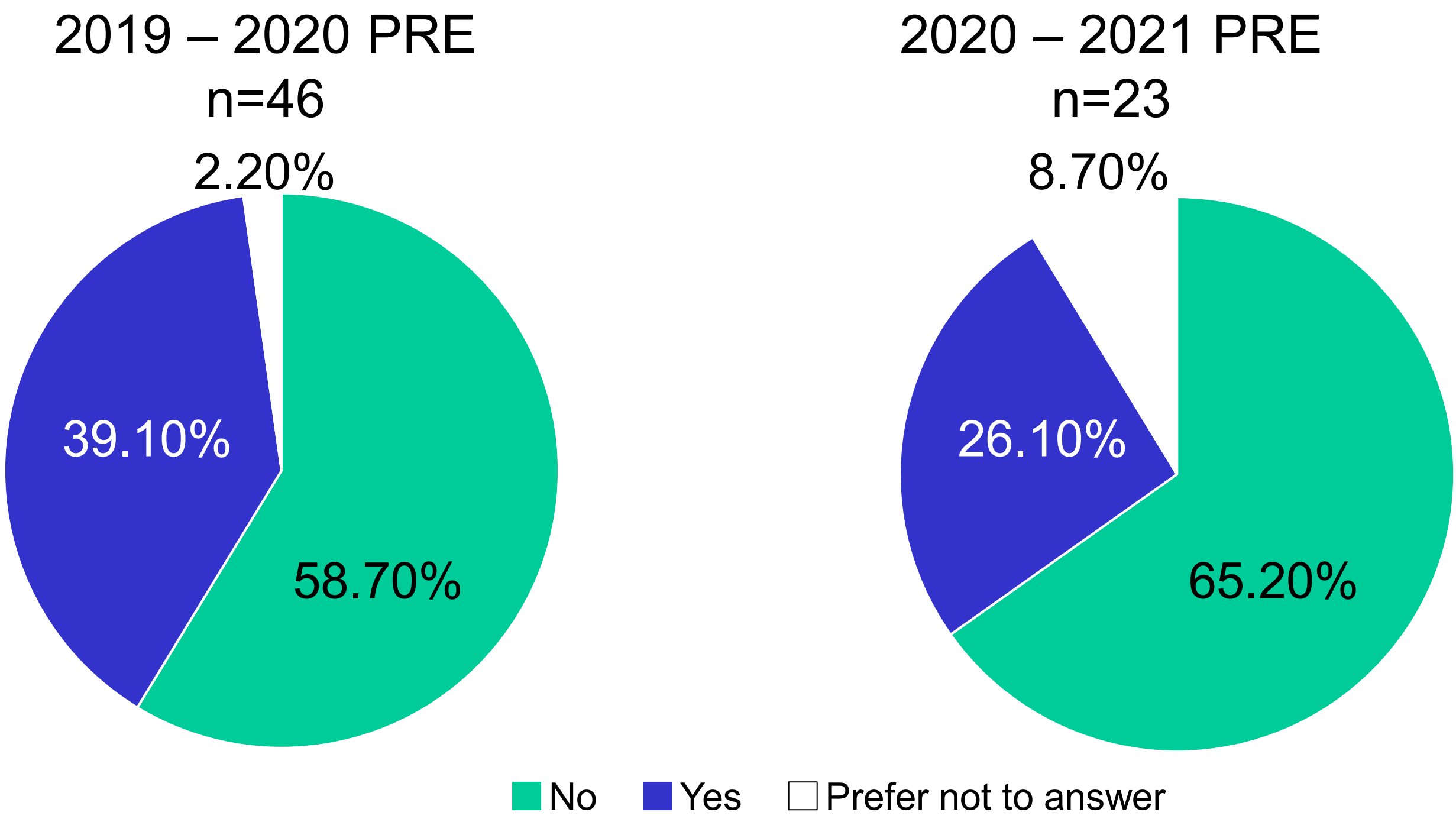


## Study Population

2019-2020	2020-2021
Results from the 2015 through 2018 Maslach Burnout Inventory assessments were reviewed and programs that were noted to have the highest percentage of residents that scored unfavorably in the domains of burnout were identified for participation in the pilot program:	Results from MBI and 2020 Well-Being Index were used to identify the highest risk programs
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. OBGYN</li><li>2. General Surgery</li><li>3. Emergency Medicine</li><li>4. Plastic surgery</li><li>5. Pediatrics</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. OBGYN</li><li>2. General Surgery</li><li>3. Emergency Medicine</li><li>4. Plastic surgery</li><li>5. Pediatrics</li><li>6. Internal Medicine</li><li>7. Peds Hospitalist fellows</li></ol>
<b>Total of 50 PGY2 residents</b> <b>One-hour appts in person or by phone</b>	<b>Total of 56 PGY2 residents and 4 fellows</b> <b>30-minute appointments by phone or video</b>

## Results: Demographics

Have you ever been diagnosed with depression, anxiety, or any other mental health disorder?



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## Results: Utilization

	Fall 2019	Spring 2020	Fall 2020	Spring 2021
Number of participants	50	50	60	60
Utilization rate	92%	70%	83%	65%
No show rate	6%	13%	10%	30%
Follow up rate	7%	6%	4%	3%

## Results: OMS-HC

	2019-2020			2020-2021		
	PRE (n=44)	POST (n=27)	P value	PRE (n=21)	POST (n=31)	P value
TOTAL	33.8±6.3	33.0±5.1	0.590	31.4±7.8	30.5±6.2	0.6191
ATTITUDES	13.9±2.7	13.1±2.7	0.234	12.4±3.3	11.8±2.8	0.5048
DISCLOSURE and HELP-SEEKING	11±2.8	10.5±2.6	0.431	11.0±3.4	10.5±3.3	0.5997
SOCIAL DISTANCE	8.9±6.3	9.4±2.1	0.349	8.1±2.3	8.2±2.3	0.8791

- Sixty six percent of residents were more likely to connect with a counselor or mental health professional in the future after participating in this program.
- Percent of trainees who have a wellness plan that they use in their life increased from 31 to 58%
- 84% of trainees rated the program as good, very good, or excellent

## Comments

“Helpful to have a setting to discuss difficult things from my job”

“Allows for normalization of meeting with mental health experts”

“They were patient, open, kind. Whenever I would say certain triggers or words they would probe a little bit further which led to a good conversation”

“a fantastic opportunity for self-reflection and focusing on my own mental health”

“Really enjoyed being involved in this program. I think it’s useful to talk about mental illness so we can normalize it and help more people who are struggling with mental illness.”

## Discussion and Next Steps

- Widely positive feedback on protected time to address mental health
  - Opportunities to improve scheduling, attendance, and content
  - Scheduling likely impacted by concurrent COVID surges in Spring 2020 and Spring 2021
- We did not move the needle on decreasing stigma based on the OMS-HC
  - However, data suggests that trainees are more likely to access mental healthcare in the future
- Overall EAP awareness and utilization increased
- Success of the program has led to expand this program to all first-year residents and fellows at Spectrum Health for the 2021-2022 academic year

### References

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