

# Developing a Perinatal Psychiatry Referral Pathway in Prince George, BC

Dr. Christine Kennedy, RCPSC  
Deanna Danskin, PQI Coach



## Objectives

To establish the need for a formal perinatal psychiatry program in Prince George, and assess providers' understanding of current mental health services, requests, and anticipated needs.

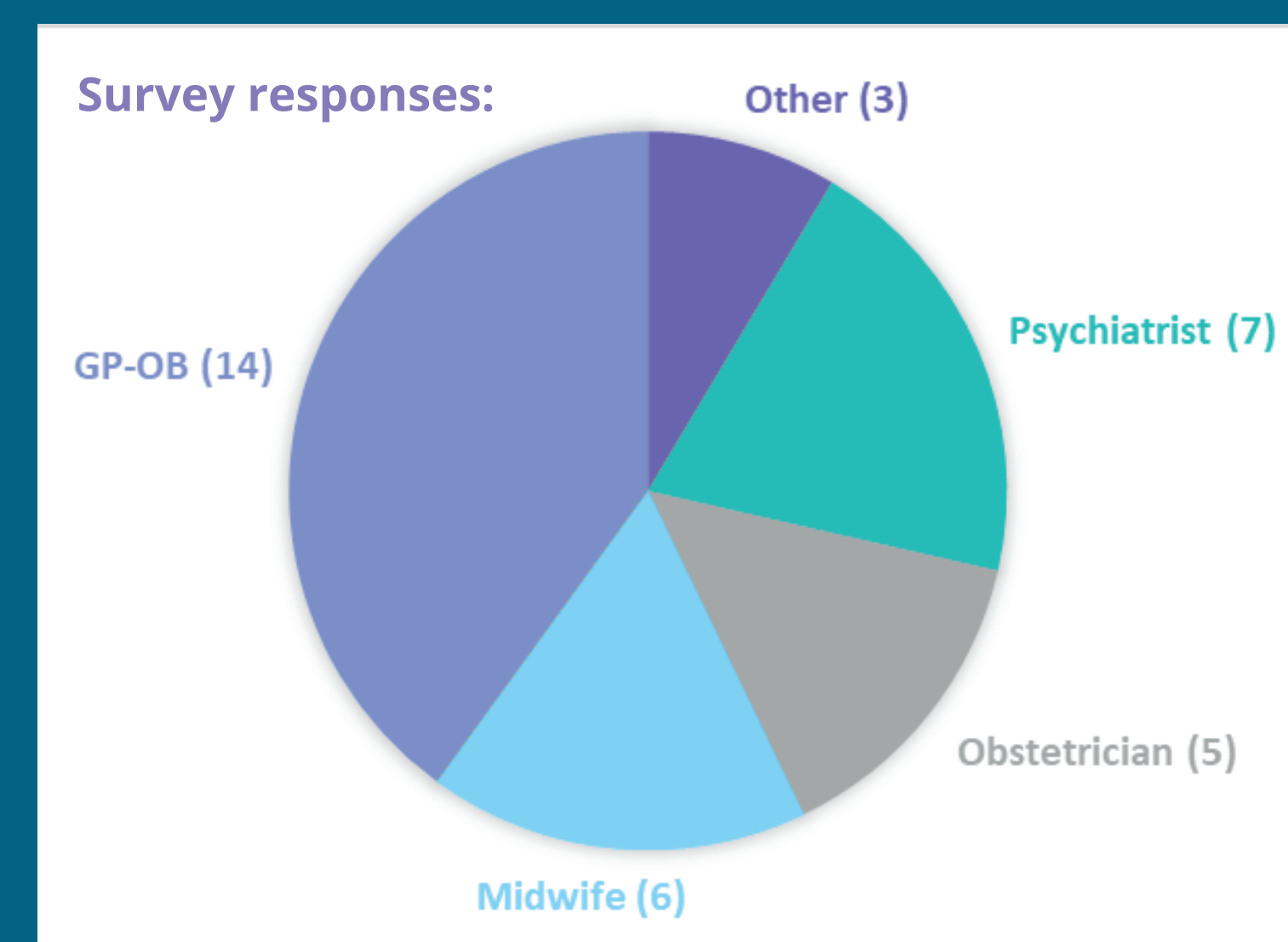


## Methods

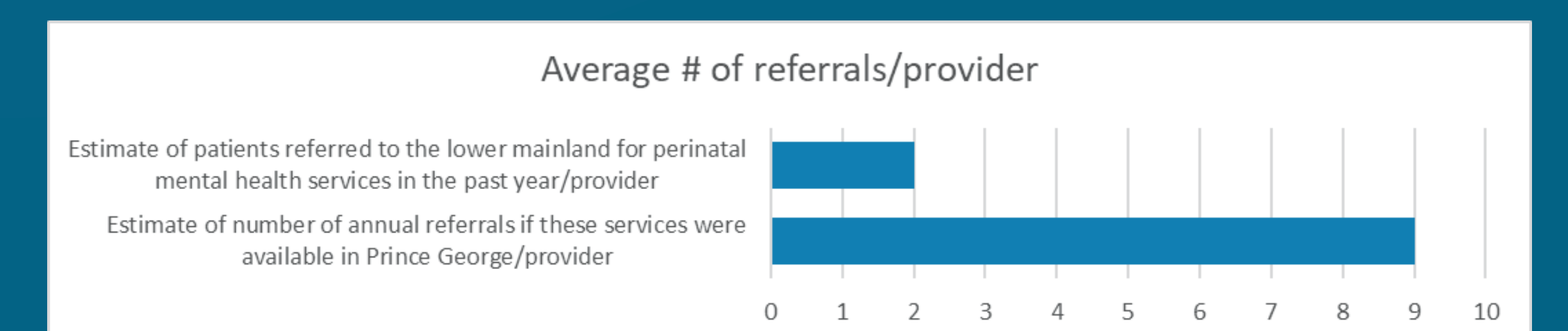
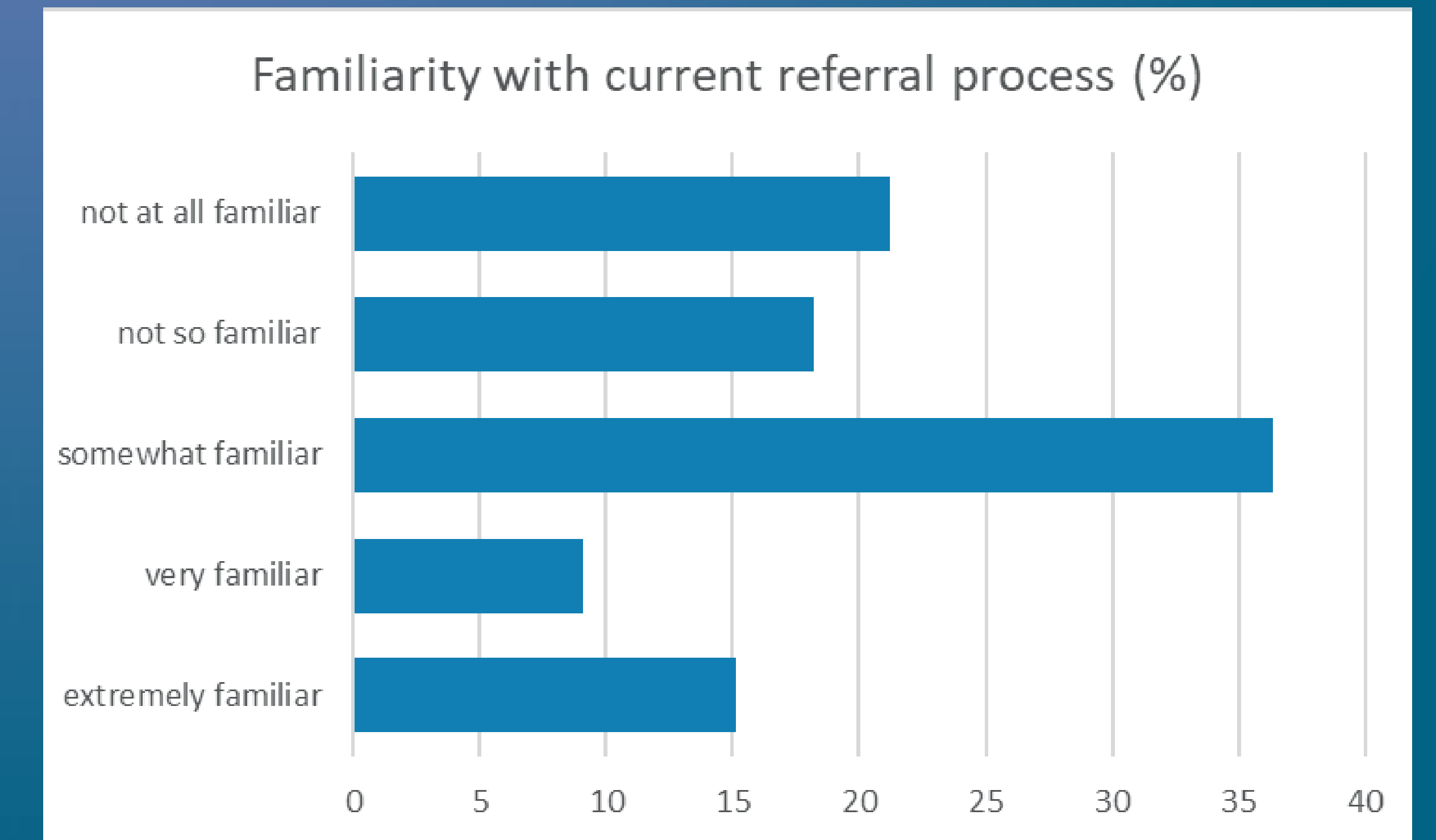
A qualitative survey involving various care providers was conducted by the Northern Health Evaluation team to assess awareness of reproductive psychiatry resources, referral patterns, and anticipated needs. Providers included midwives, GP-obstetricians (GP-OBs), Nurse Practitioners, Obstetricians, and Psychiatrists. The survey aimed to gauge familiarity with referral pathways and comfort levels with prescribing during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

## Results

- The survey received 35 responses, mostly from GP-OBs



- Most respondents were 'somewhat familiar' with current referral processes
- Providers estimated they would make more referrals if a service were available locally
- 82% expressed that a local referral pathway would be 'extremely helpful'



## Perinatal Mental Health Matters

- 1 in 5 will experience mental illness during the perinatal period
- Depression and anxiety are most common pregnancy complications [1,2]
- Individuals are 22x more likely to have a psychiatric admission in the month following the birth of their child than any other point in life [3]
- Risks of untreated depression include poor prenatal care, suicidality, impaired bonding, and risk to fetus
- Poor perinatal mental health can result in poor cognitive and social functioning, and mental health disorders in children [4,5]

## The Northern Context

- Travel away from home community to deliver, negatively affects mental health [6].
- Indigenous patients have higher rates of peripartum depression [7]
- Currently no formal Reproductive Psychiatry Program in Prince George
- BC Women's Reproductive Mental Health Program is located in Vancouver, 6-9 month wait list [8]

## Next Steps

The Prince George perinatal psychiatry service opened in 2023, with ongoing improvements to the referral form and pathway. New group psychotherapy services, including cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) Skills groups and psychodynamic therapy, are being considered to meet the highlighted needs in developing the perinatal mental health program.

## References

