

# Breast Cancer Bundle of Care: a pilot study

Authors: Yvonne Zissiadis<sup>1</sup>, Anna Driver<sup>2</sup>, Nicola Forsyth<sup>3</sup>, Sarah Wise<sup>4</sup>, Julia Schulz<sup>2</sup>, Angela Ives<sup>5</sup> and Christobel Saunders<sup>6</sup>

Affiliations: 1.Radiation Oncology, GenesisCare, Perth, WA, Australia 2.GenesisCare, Alexandria, NSW, Australia 3.GenesisCare, Perth, WA, Australia 4.School of Public Health, University of Technology Sydney, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia 5.Cancer and Palliative Care Research and Evaluation Unit, University of Western Australia Medical School, Perth, Western Australia, Australia 6.James Stewart Chair of Surgery, Melbourne Medical School University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia



## CONTEXT

- A complete understanding of the costs associated with cancer treatment in Australia and their true impact on patients is lacking.<sup>1</sup> The complexities of public and private healthcare services, combined with a patient's unfamiliarity with the health system can make it difficult for patients to navigate, leading to the problem of unexpected out-of-pocket costs.<sup>1</sup>
- For women with breast cancer, the financial burden can be large, creating additional stress at an already stressful time. As outlined by the BCNA, costs can vary significantly based on whether a public or private pathway is taken:  
*"A woman without private health insurance pays around \$3,600 in out-of-pocket costs. This figure rises to \$7,000 or more for a woman who holds private health insurance."*<sup>2</sup>
- Global research covering 4000 breast cancer patients by All.Can<sup>3</sup> found that cancer patients/carers perceive four main obstacles to improved survival and quality of life:
  - the need to improve efficiency in diagnosis
  - the need for more "joined up" holistic care
  - psychosocial challenges and support; and
  - the financial impact of care.
- GenesisCare and the University of Western Australia (UWA) partnered in 2018 to investigate ways to overcome some of the difficulties that patients experience when being treated for breast cancer. The partnership sought to develop an Early-stage Breast Cancer Bundle which provided all the services that an early-stage breast cancer patient would typically utilise during the first year of treatment and provided transparency on the cost to the patient.
- The Bundle was established in July 2022 in partnership with St John of God Hospital – Subiaco and provides surgery, medical oncology, radiation oncology, radiology, pathology, physiotherapy, dietetics and clinical psychology as well as a patient navigation service
- The Pilot commenced in Perth. To date the pilot has recruited 40 patients and is being evaluated by the University of Technology Sydney.

## AIM

To deliver a "joined up", holistic package of care and support to people newly diagnosed with breast cancer, providing transparency on total cost, with measurable excellent outcomes that can be implemented in other regions and potentially be broadened to other areas of cancer with similar challenges.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE BUNDLE

- Improve patient experience:** Navigation support and easy access to services
- Create financial transparency and certainty:** Upfront transparency on cost for the full treatment pathway
- Improve patient outcomes:** Lower patients' distress throughout treatment enabled by support and timely access to services
- Create a sustainable, scalable model:** Create a replicable, scalable and fully costed program that can be expanded to other geographies with outcomes tracked and measured

1 Bygrave A, Whittaker K, Paul C, Fradgley EA, Varlow M, Aranda S. Australian Experiences of Out-of-Pocket Costs and Financial Burden Following a Cancer Diagnosis: A Systematic Review. Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2021 Mar 2;18(5):2422. doi: 10.3390/ijerph18052422. PMID: 33801282; PMCID: PMC7967550.

2 Breast Cancer Network of Australia. The financial impact of breast cancer. 2016 BCNA, URL: <https://www.bcna.org.au/media/5609/the-financial-impact-of-breast-cancer.pdf>

3 All.Can international patient survey

## METHODS

To develop the Bundle, GenesisCare and UWA worked with a number of stakeholders to determine the scope, inclusion criteria Bundle model and costs as well as pricing. Below outlines the key steps that were undertaken to develop the Bundle to Go-Live:

- Defined the scope of the Bundle:** Consultation with breast cancer treatment providers, allied health professionals and insurers to determine the appropriateness of the pathway and MDT for the Bundle in Perth
- Reviewed literature and consulted widely** including surgeons, medical oncologists, radiation oncologists, allied health professionals, insurers and patients to confirm the pathway, services and to test the concept
- Defined the costs within the pathway** working with key stakeholders as well as desktop research on MBS/ PBS/ private health insurance coverage
- Tested with key stakeholders (including patients)** to confirm the model was viable and costs were accurate and appropriate for the market
- Finalised design** based on feedback from key stakeholders
- Confirmed providers and insurers participating in the Bundle** based on MDT and established referral pathways. MOU established with each provider to confirm ways of working
- Recruited patient navigator** and determined scope of role
- Designed and set up of the independent Evaluation of the Bundle** in partnership with University of Technology Sydney
- Prepared for Go-Live**, setting up people, systems, processes to enable the Bundle between all providers

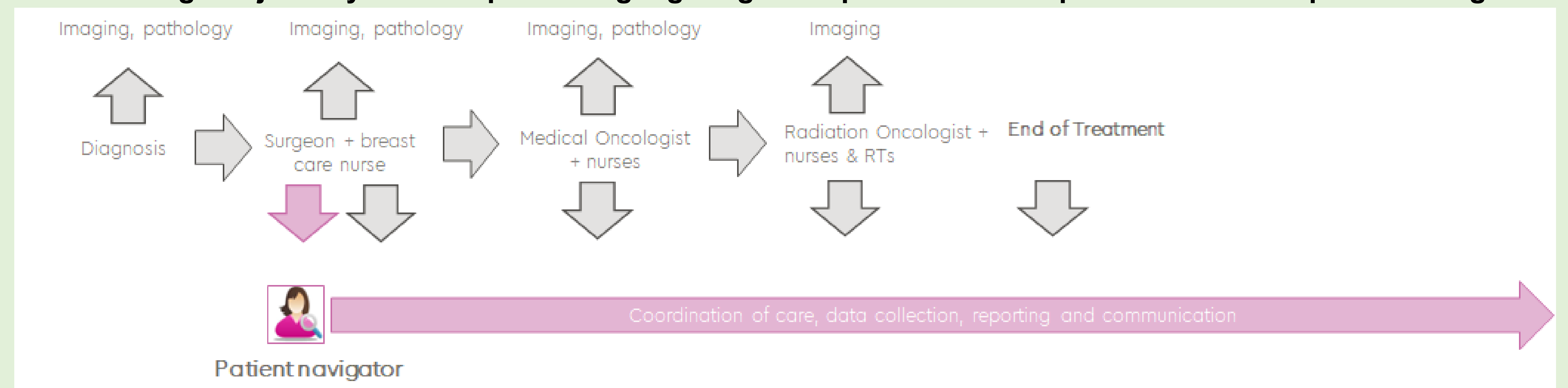
The Bundle went live and commenced recruitment of patients in July 2022.

## THE ROLE OF THE PATIENT NAVIGATOR

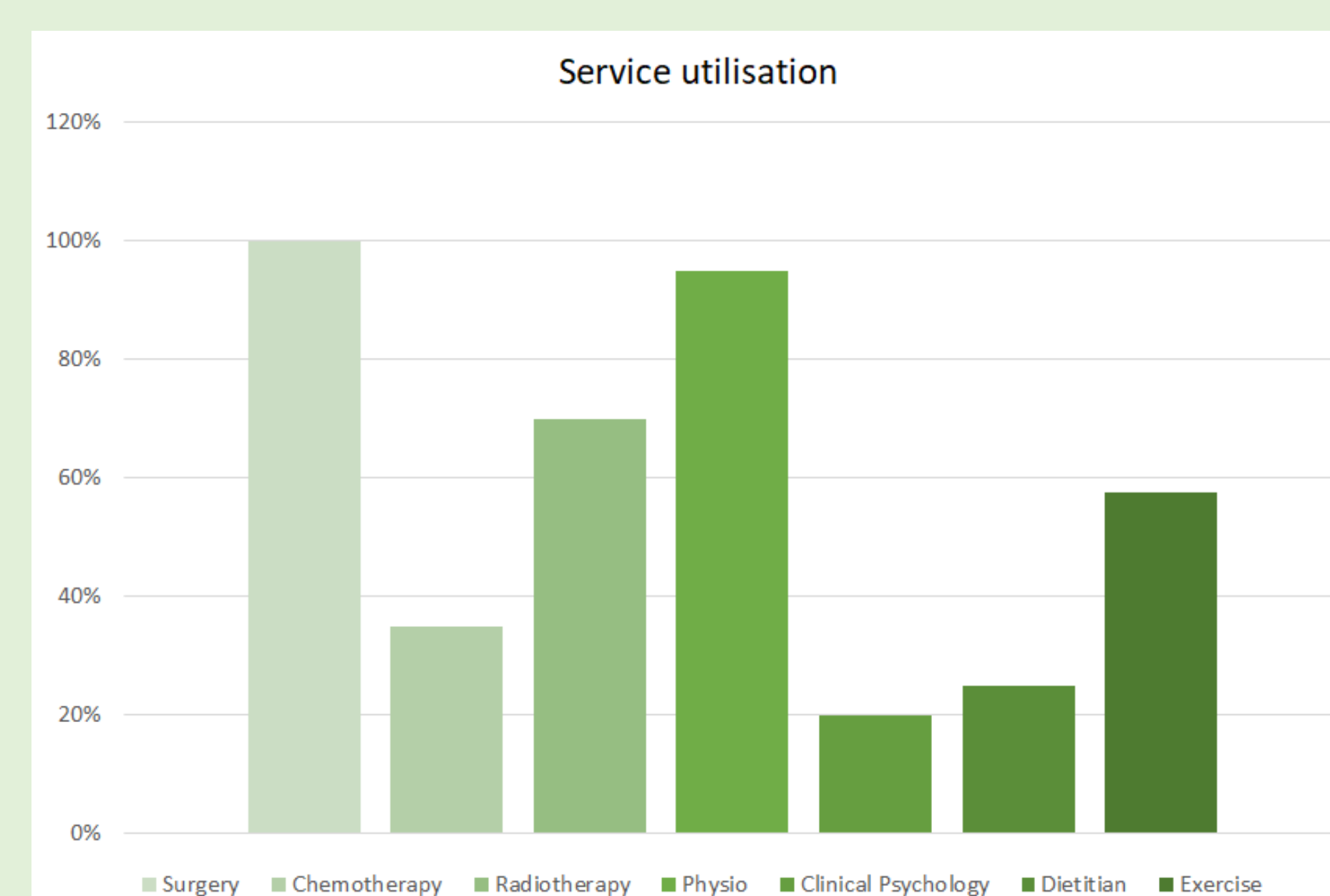
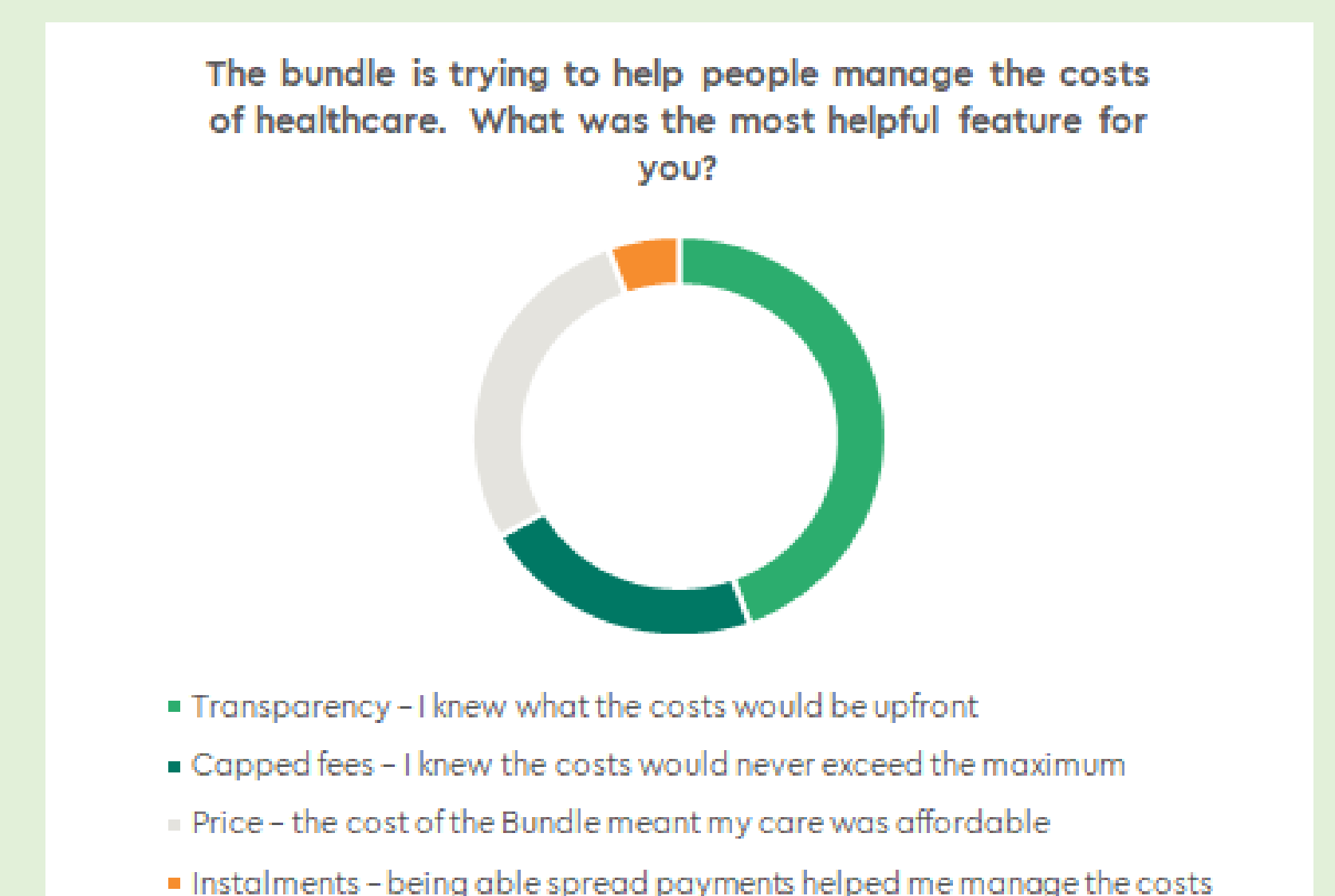
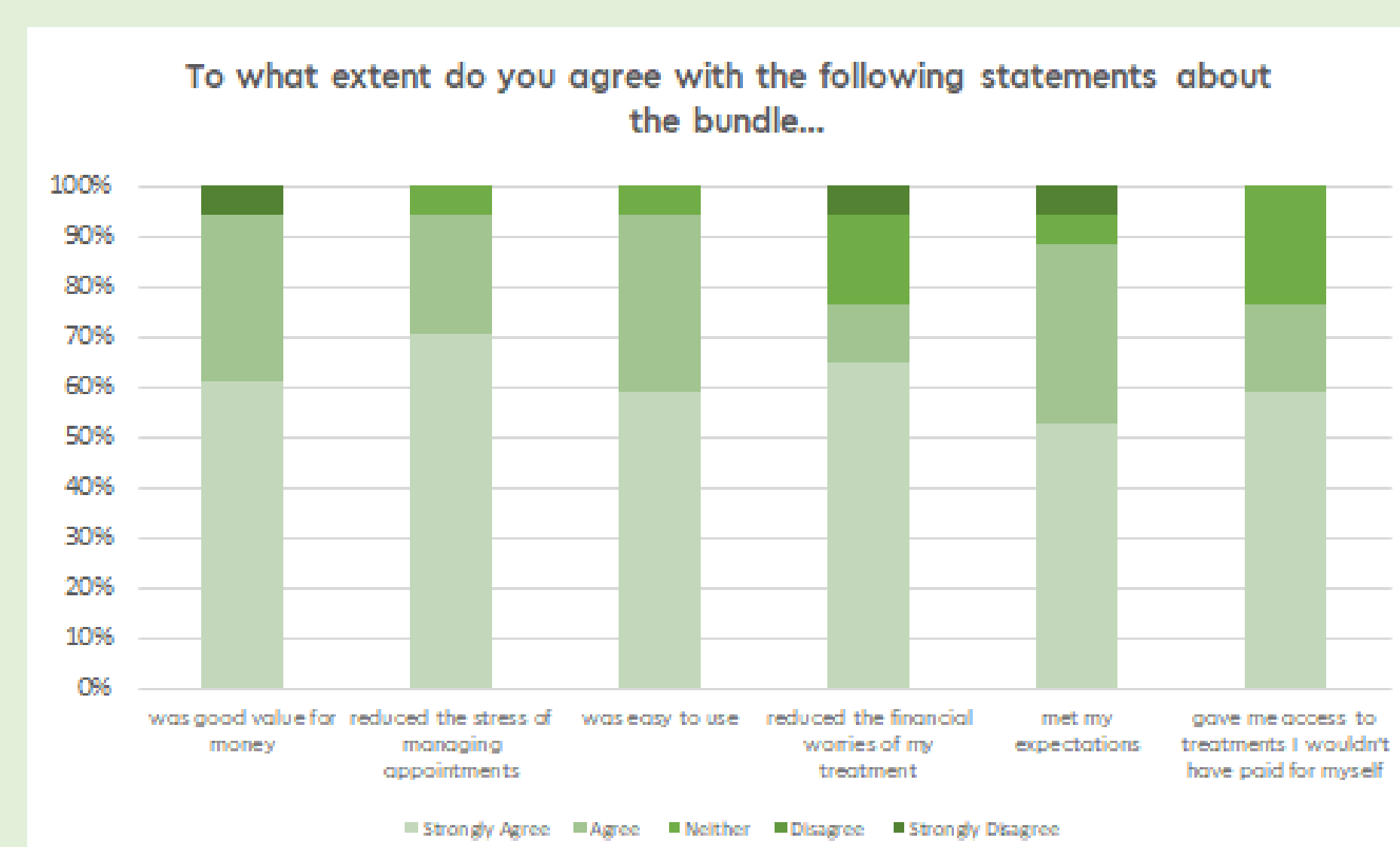
The patient navigator is a patient centric concierge services that is central to the breast bundle. The patient navigator role assists with:

- Patient contact from diagnosis to year follow up
- Collection of care plans across each individual specialty to create one overarching care plan: explanation of pathway across the specialties, ensure compliance care plan, check in regularly for extra support, prepare for transition back into 'normal life' and patient follow up
- Assists with referrals, appointments and data collection
- Connected into the patient's specific clinical network to ensure patient gets access to providers in their local sphere and clinically signed off by specialist
- Connect patient's with partner organisations where those services are not available directly with GC
- Keep patient's entire team connected and up to date on their progress
- Connect the patient back into GP and support networks post treatment

### Patient navigator journey with the patient highlighting touchpoints between providers and the patient navigator



## INTERIM FINDINGS FROM FIRST 40 PATIENTS



### Patient feedback

"The bundle provided a holistic approach to my treatment, the medical team were excellent and communicated well with each other and I felt very safe and very much an individual."

"I can't emphasise enough how critically important the Patient Navigator has been throughout my whole breast cancer journey. There's a lot to take in and having a dedicated person to explain the paperwork, the financial side of the package and the various treatment procedures in simple, easy to digest chunks is invaluable."

"I consider myself fortunate to have been able to access the Bundle when I was first diagnosed and have nothing but praise for all the people who were involved in my treatment".