

DEFINE OPPORTUNITY

Background, Problem, and Goal:

In 2016, 400 patients received patch testing at the Kaye Edmonton Clinic. Patch testing is a costly specialized test used to diagnose allergic contact dermatitis. A variety of substances are applied to the patients' skin to determine which of these lead to an allergic reaction. In theory, by informing the patient about what substance (or substances) they are allergic to, they should be able to achieve full recovery, provided they are able to avoid the offending agent(s). There remains a need to assess the effectiveness and utility of the patch testing and follow-up education process, which will inform future interventions to improve clinic efficiency.

Problem Statements:

- Currently, there is no mechanism to receive feedback from patients who have completed patch testing. This results in a lack of awareness of patient allergen testing impact (i.e. patch test effectiveness).
- Dermatologist and allergists do not have clear referral guidelines to ensure that only appropriate patients are referred. In 2016, we received >70 inappropriate/incomplete referrals, causing extended wait times.

Goal Statements:

- To develop a consistent mechanism to obtain feedback from patients post (4 months) patch testing to determine patch test effectiveness.
- To develop patch test referral guidelines supporting referring dermatologist and allergists to decrease the number of inappropriate/incomplete referrals by 50%.

MANAGE CHANGE

Collaboration & Communication Strategies:

The project team included the patch test physician and the booking coordinator, plus a research assistant, medical student, path to care consultant, and quality improvement consultant.

The collected patient feedback will be used to help identify opportunities to improve the usefulness of patch testing for patients. Suggested interventions will require action by all members of the patch testing team, including physicians, nurses, and administrative staff. As the suggestions will be directly from patient feedback, this will create buy-in and urgency from the care team.

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Dermatology Patch Test Clinic at
3C Kaye Edmonton Clinic

Last updated: 2017-06-28 10:11

Alberta Health Services - Edmonton Zone
Estimated time to routine appointment: Within 9 months

SERVICE DESCRIPTION

A patch test is a method used to determine whether a specific substance causes allergic inflammation of a patient's skin. Any individual suspected of having allergic contact dermatitis or atopic dermatitis needs patch testing.

When the cause of an allergy is not clear, a skin patch test may be done to help find the cause of your allergy. Skin patch tests are done to see if a certain substance is causing an allergic skin reaction.

For a skin patch test, the allergen solution is placed on a pad that is taped to the skin for 24 to 72 hours.

ADDITIONAL SERVICE DETAILS

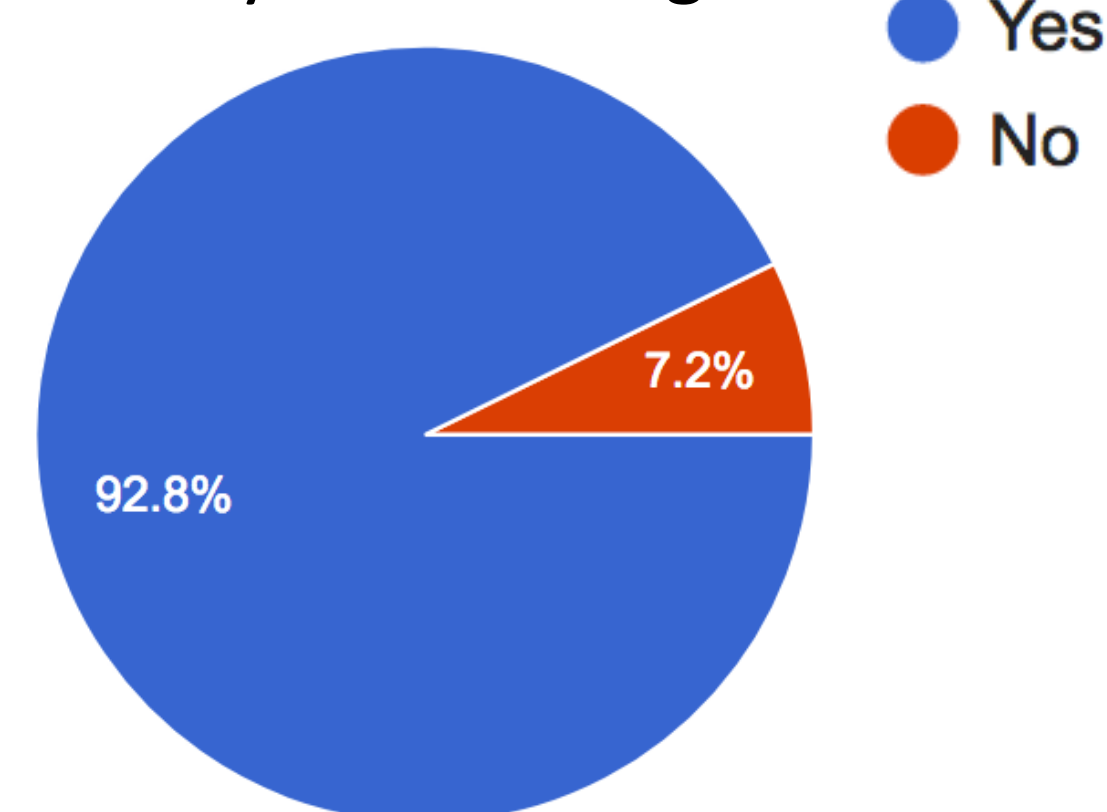
We do not accept referrals for patients with no apparent dermatitis who simply request testing.

BUILD UNDERSTANDING

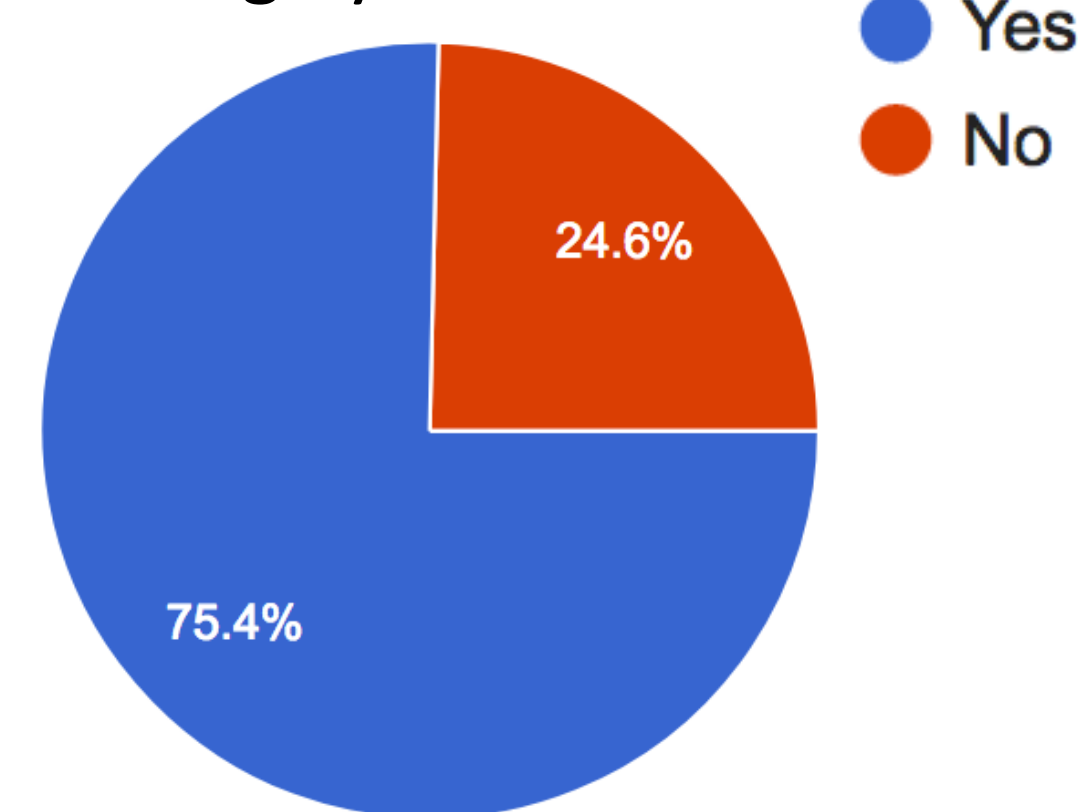
Process Assessment:

A referral process map (see bottom centre) was drawn to transparently review the current process. Also, a Pilot project survey was developed and sent to patients who had received patch testing from January 2016 to July 2016. The aim of this survey was to determine patients' perceptions about the usefulness of patch testing, and whether the testing helped them improve and manage their contact dermatitis. The survey also asked patients to suggest improvements to our clinic process.

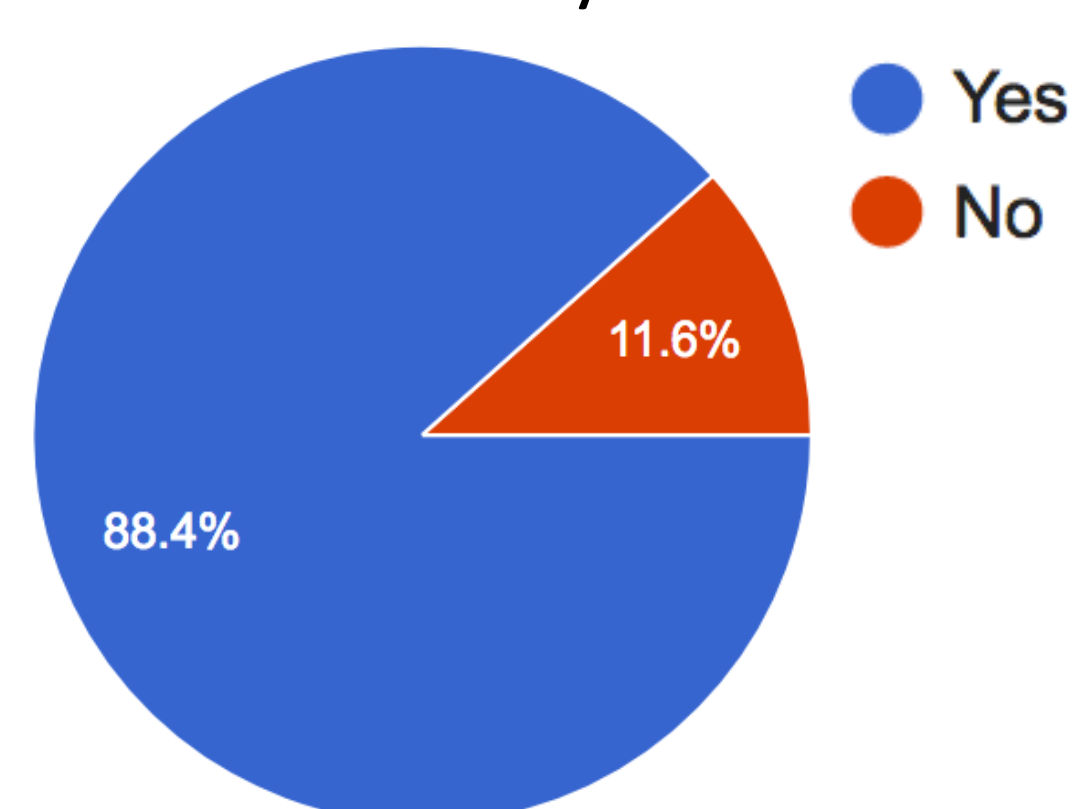
Did patch testing help you learn what you are allergic to?



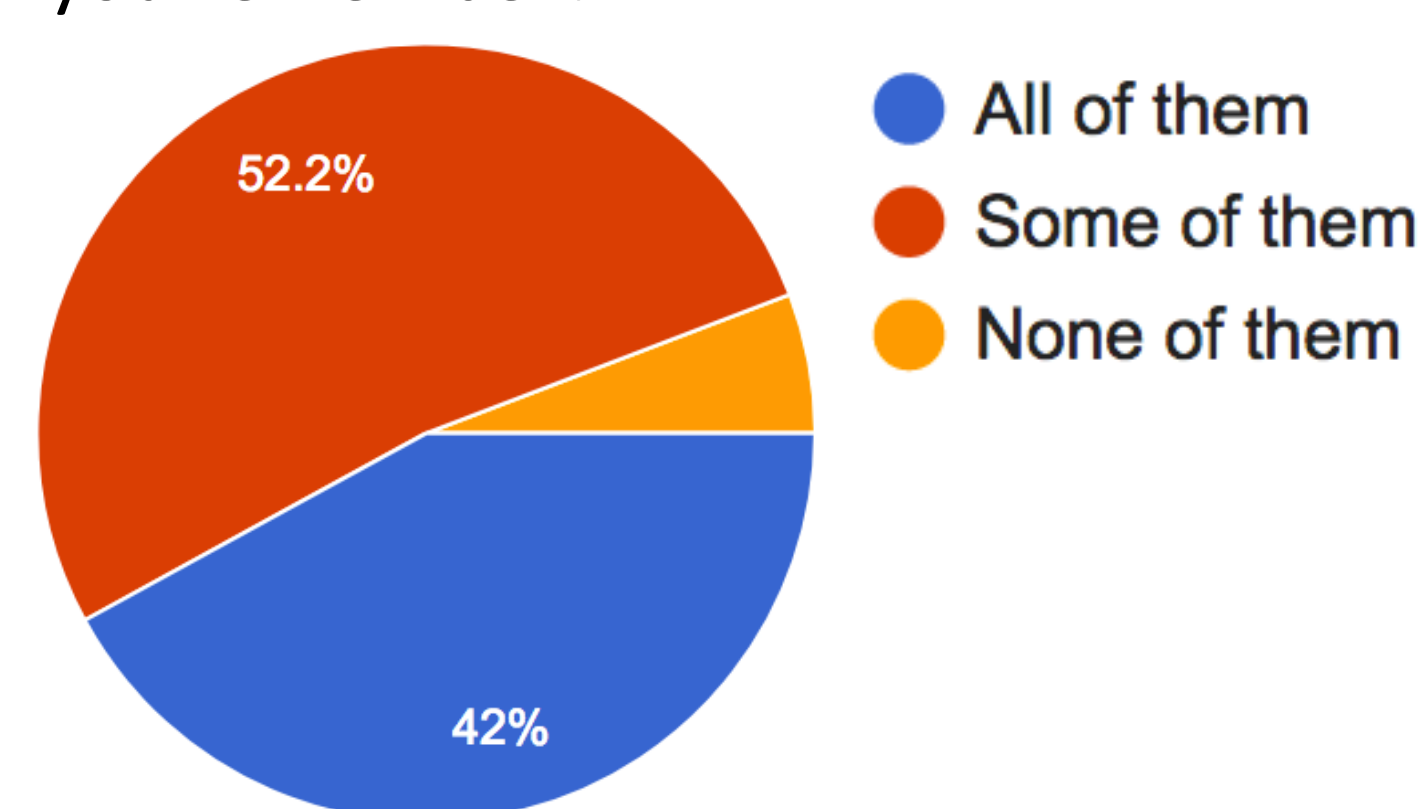
Did knowing your allergens help you manage your rash?



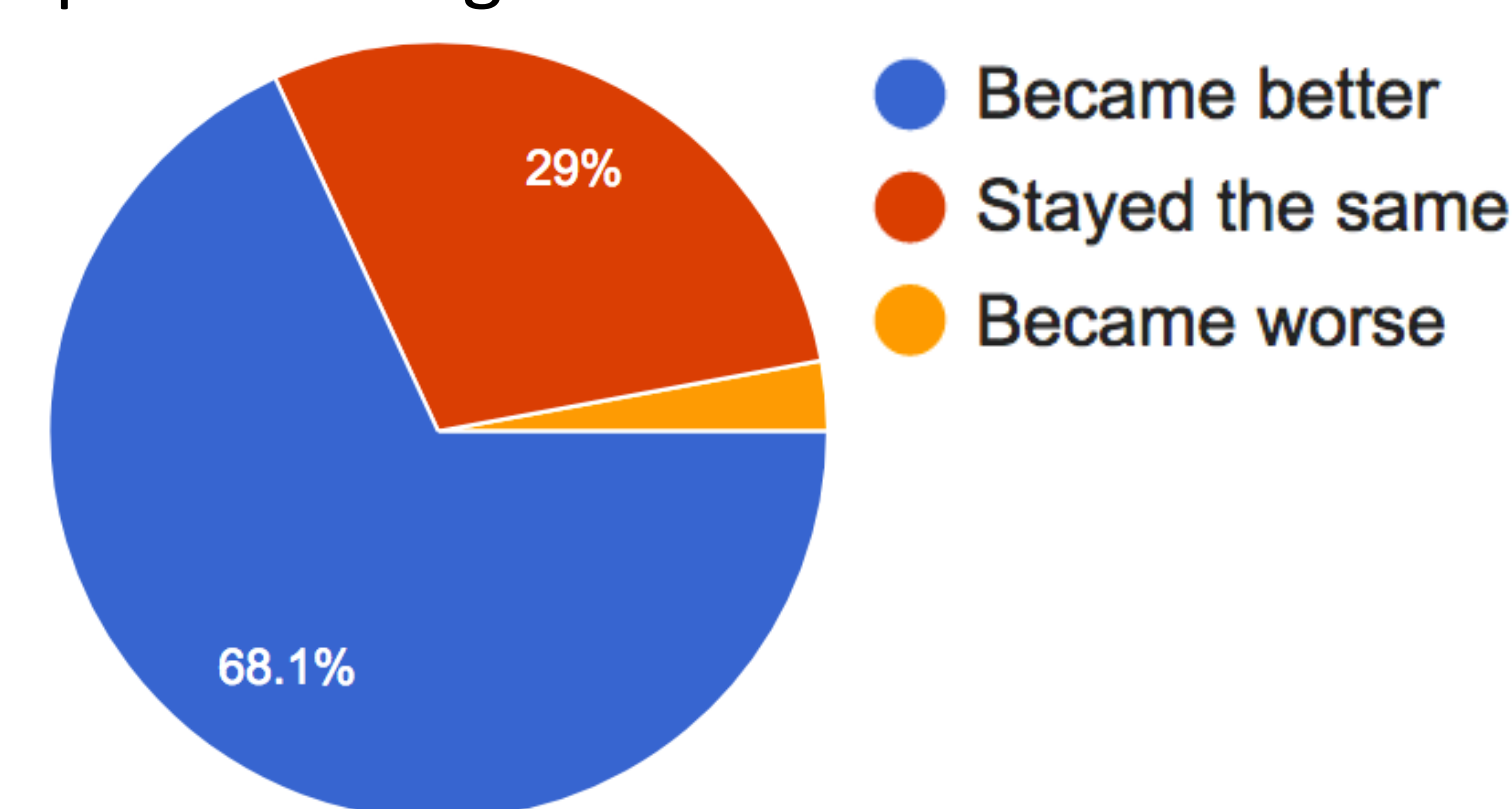
Would you recommend patch testing to friends or family with a similar rash?



How many of your allergens can you remember?



How has your rash changed since patch testing?



ACT TO IMPROVE

Improvement Selection and Implementation Plan: Time frame: Aug-Dec 31, 2017

SUGGESTED PATIENT OPPORTUNITIES	PDSA #1
While they are waiting for patch testing, provide patients with a list of things that are 'truly hypoallergenic' (ie. free of all common contact allergens) either directly or via their doctor.	Post the safe list on the Alberta Referral Directory (ARD), available to all referring dermatologists and GP's to share with their patients. Also enclose the safe list with each paper questionnaire that is already mailed to all patient's at the time their referral is received.
Have patients bring in products that they react to for patch testing—this will make the results more relevant to each patient. Inform patients to do this at the time that their appointment is booked.	1. Within the ARD, include instructions about what to bring to the first appointment at the Patch Test Clinic, such as products/picture of the product and ingredients that may be causing the allergy. 2. Continue to include with the patient appointment letter specific instructions about what to bring. Start reminding patients 2 weeks before the appointment about what to bring.
Establish patch test follow up survey to be sent to all patients to probe patient's recall of test results, compliance with recommendations, and outcome for their dermatitis/rash.	Post patch testing (4 months) implement a follow up survey. If patients no better then, implement a dermatologist booking card process. Patch test clinic provides the results, along with informing patients to follow up with the referring dermatologist.
Develop a user friendly way to help patients remember what they are allergic to.	Develop a patient allergen tracking tool.

PDSA #2

- Define referral guidelines.
- Updated and finalize referral guidelines within the Alberta Referral Directory.
- Process map the referral management process.
- Integrate the EPIC eCLINICIAN and Path to Care process.
- Develop a process to identify inappropriate/incomplete referrals: initially post-intervention, and subsequently pre-intervention.
- Review results and make improvements to referral guidelines, integrated with a transparent referral management process.

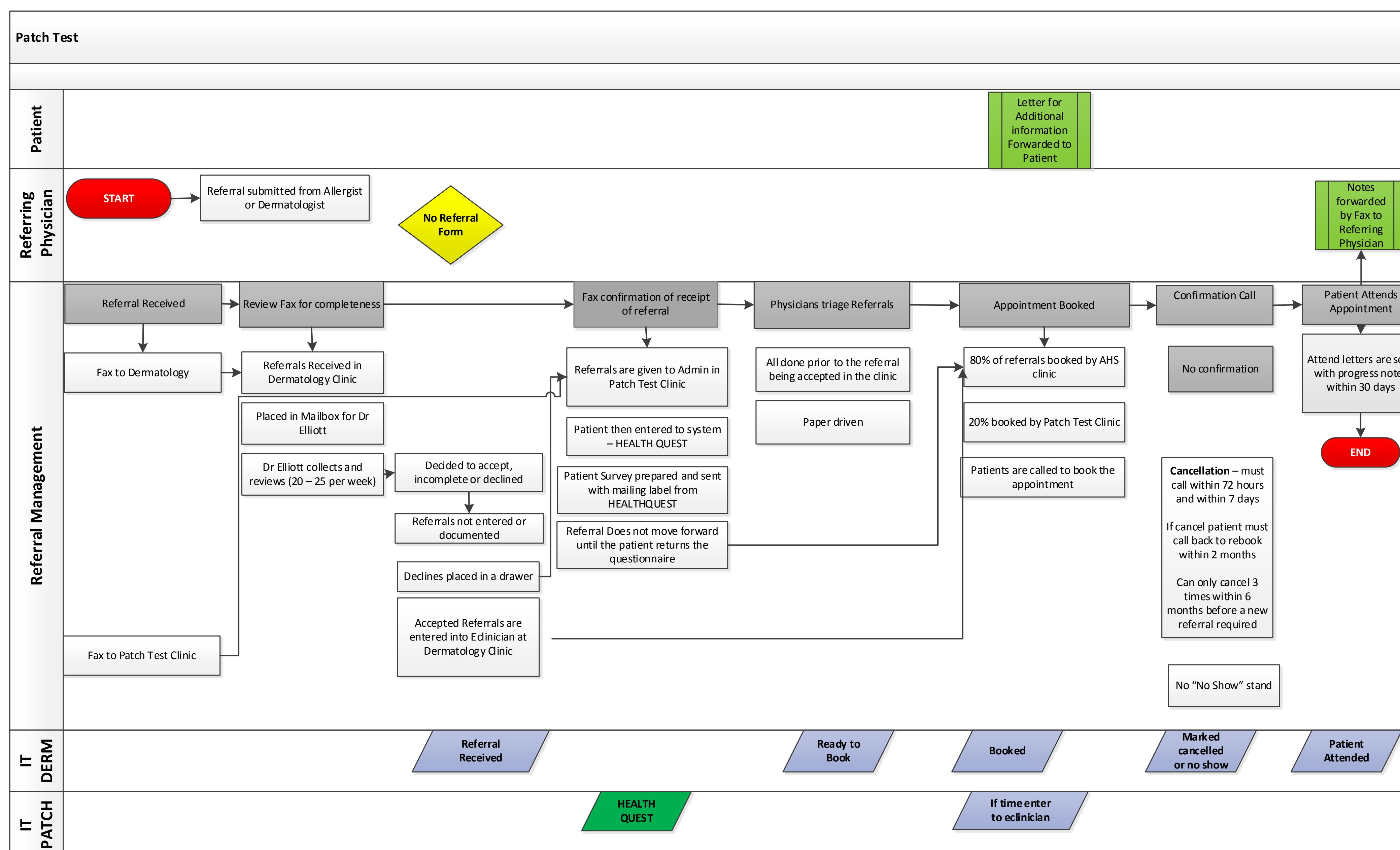
SUSTAIN RESULTS

Reinforce Ownership, Measurement, & Continuous Improvement:

The patch test team will review PDSA #1 goals, revise and implement the survey making it part of the clinic routine. They will gather data related to PDSA #2 (number of inappropriate/incomplete referrals) and further revise referral guidelines. Addressing PDSA #2 will improve patient access, quality of care, and clinic efficiency.

SHARE LEARNING

Lessons Learned: The Patient perspective (their 'voice') is the best determiner of the effectiveness of patch testing. Only the patient can provide insight about whether having allergen knowledge resulted in a behavioural change which impacted their quality of life.



Allergy Patch Testing

Many patients come to our Patch Test Clinic both frustrated by their persistent rash and a bit nervous about having to undergo such an involved test. They describe the redness, swelling, and itching of their skin, and the detrimental effect this has on their daily lives. "Can you please just tell me what I'm allergic to doc?" the patient asks, "It's been driving me crazy! I need to know what to avoid."

We attach adhesive patches filled with an array of different pure substances onto the patient's back, remove all of these after two days, and then wait two more days before concluding which allergens are positive. In some patients we find they are allergic to just one or a few things; in others, a longer list of allergens is found. Now they know what to avoid. However, sometimes we find nothing; the rash is not caused by contact allergy.

One day, I ran into one of my patch test patients, who greeted me smiling and enthusiastically pointed to where her rash used to be. Where there were once red, raised, scabbed-over oozing circular lesions, now there were only faintly colored spots.

We want all patients to have a similar result. By letting them know what things to avoid, they can cure their own rash by simply switching to products that do not contain their allergens. As my former patient walks away smiling, I am reminded of the positive impact that patch testing can have, allowing these patients to get back to their lives rash free!