

Primary Care Provider-to-Specialist Communication Services Across Canada for Persons with Dementia: An Environmental Scan

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Background

- **Persons living with dementia (PLWD)** face complex needs ^{1,2}
- **Primary care providers (PCPs)** play a central role in dementia diagnosis and management ³
- **PCPs report feeling underprepared in caring for PLWD** and can benefit from timely specialist advice ⁴

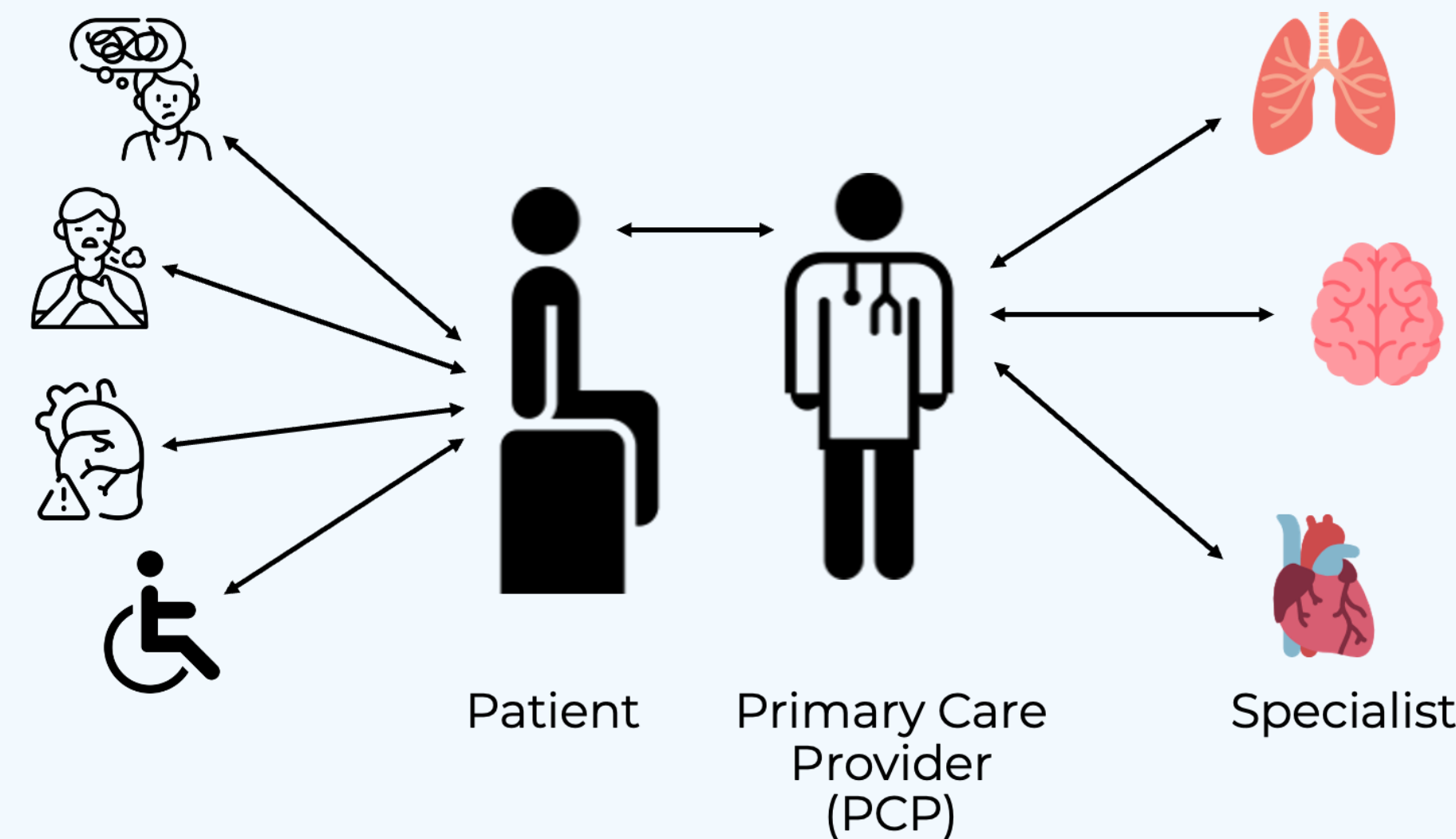


Figure 1. Example workflow of a primary care provider-to-specialist consultation service

OBJECTIVE: Identify and describe Canadian services that enable PCPs to obtain specialist advice without a referral for the care of people with dementia.

Approach

SEARCH: Literature (PubMed, Embase), grey literature (Google, national/provincial health websites) and clinician consultations. Included services let PCPs get specialist advice without a formal referral

DATA EXTRACTION: Two reviewers independently extracted data from each service's primary website

KEY INFORMANTS: Service representatives interviewed to fill data gaps (6 completed to date)

Results

- **Access:** most services operate in Ontario (8), British Columbia (5) and Alberta (4)
- **Evidence is sparse:** little public data on funding, costs, and uptake
- **Mostly non-urgent:** 4 of 17 services can handle urgent requests; most respond within days

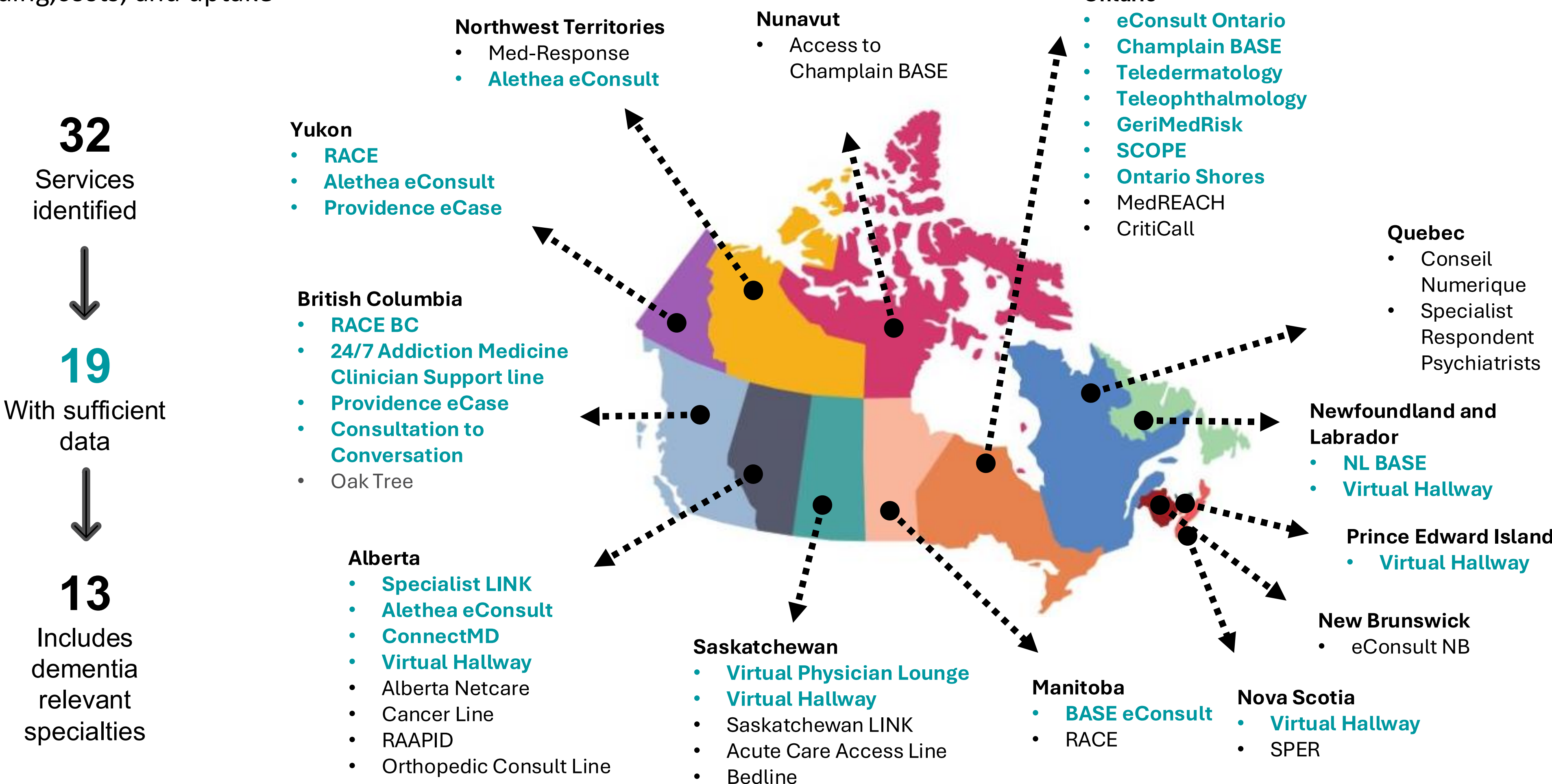


Figure 2. Canadian services identified for PCP-to-specialist communication. Services in teal had sufficient data and were analyzed (n = 19)

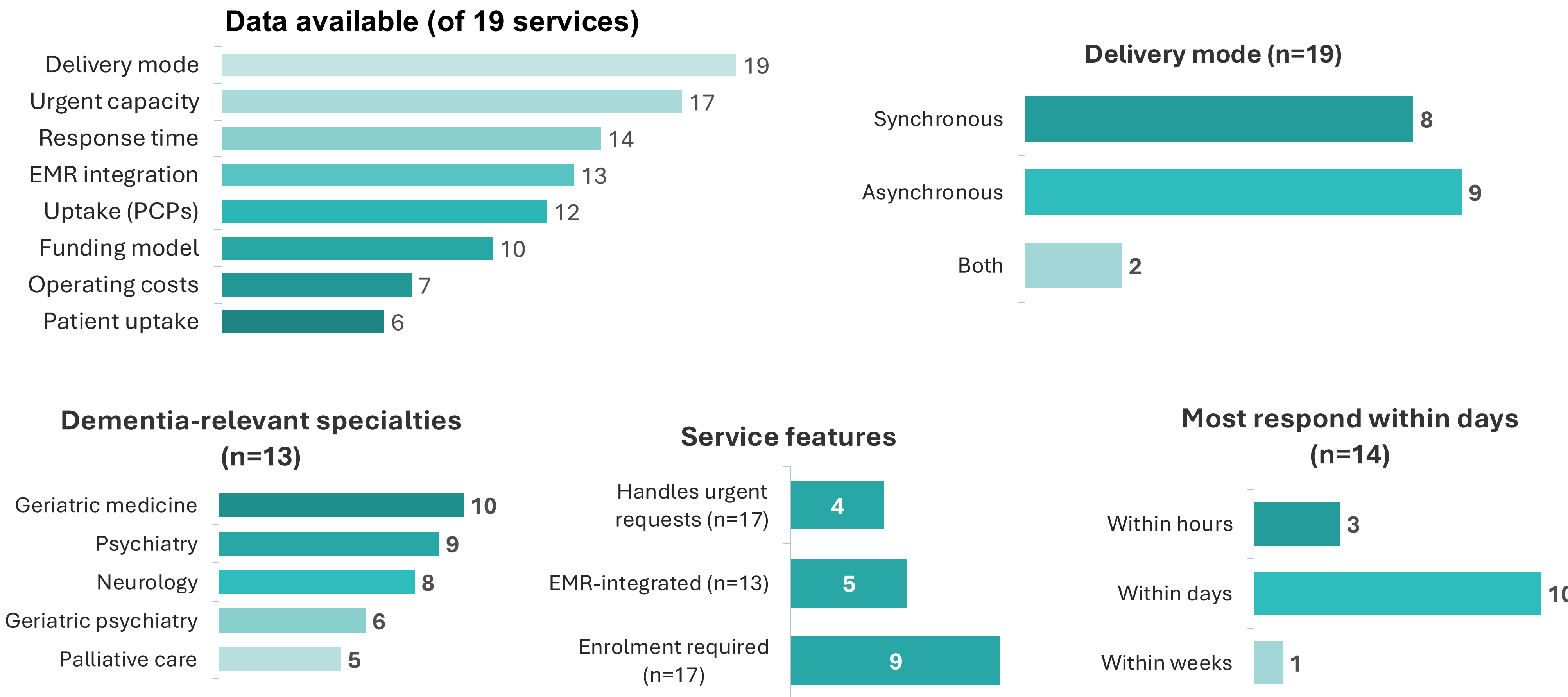


Figure 3. Characteristics of the 19 analyzed services; n = services with data for each characteristic

Conclusions

- Communication services between PCPs and specialists vary widely across Canada, leading to **regional differences and potential inequities in access to timely specialist advice**
- The variety of service types (e.g., specialty-specific, regional, or differing billing models) **may pose challenges for physicians to navigate**, potentially limiting uptake and consistency of care
- The findings highlight important gaps and opportunities in PCP-to-specialist communication for dementia care and may help **inform future efforts to improve the accessibility, consistency, and integration of specialist communication services across Canada**

What's next?

Next study: Providers' attitudes and perspectives on eConsult for equitable dementia care.

Building on this scan, we will explore PCPs and specialist attitudes toward using eConsult for persons living with dementia, and how it can be adopted, implemented, and sustained to ensure equitable access to specialist advice, with attention to equity-seeking groups.

Questions? Contact Sarah Syed at ssyed5@uottawa.ca

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