

PAL-MED CONNECT®: Who Can The Palliative Medicine Practitioner Call For Help?

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Introduction

Community physicians are often ill-prepared for the management of complex symptoms in patients with serious, chronic illnesses. With a shortage of board-certified physicians in palliative medicine, there is a lack of access to pain and symptom management expertise to care for these patients.

Grant Objectives

- 1) Increase access to palliative care expertise for Californians living with chronic diseases with limited access due to geographic, insurance status or income limitations (Fig. 1).
- 2) Evaluate the quality, acceptability and effectiveness of a telephone/e-mail-based palliative care consultation.

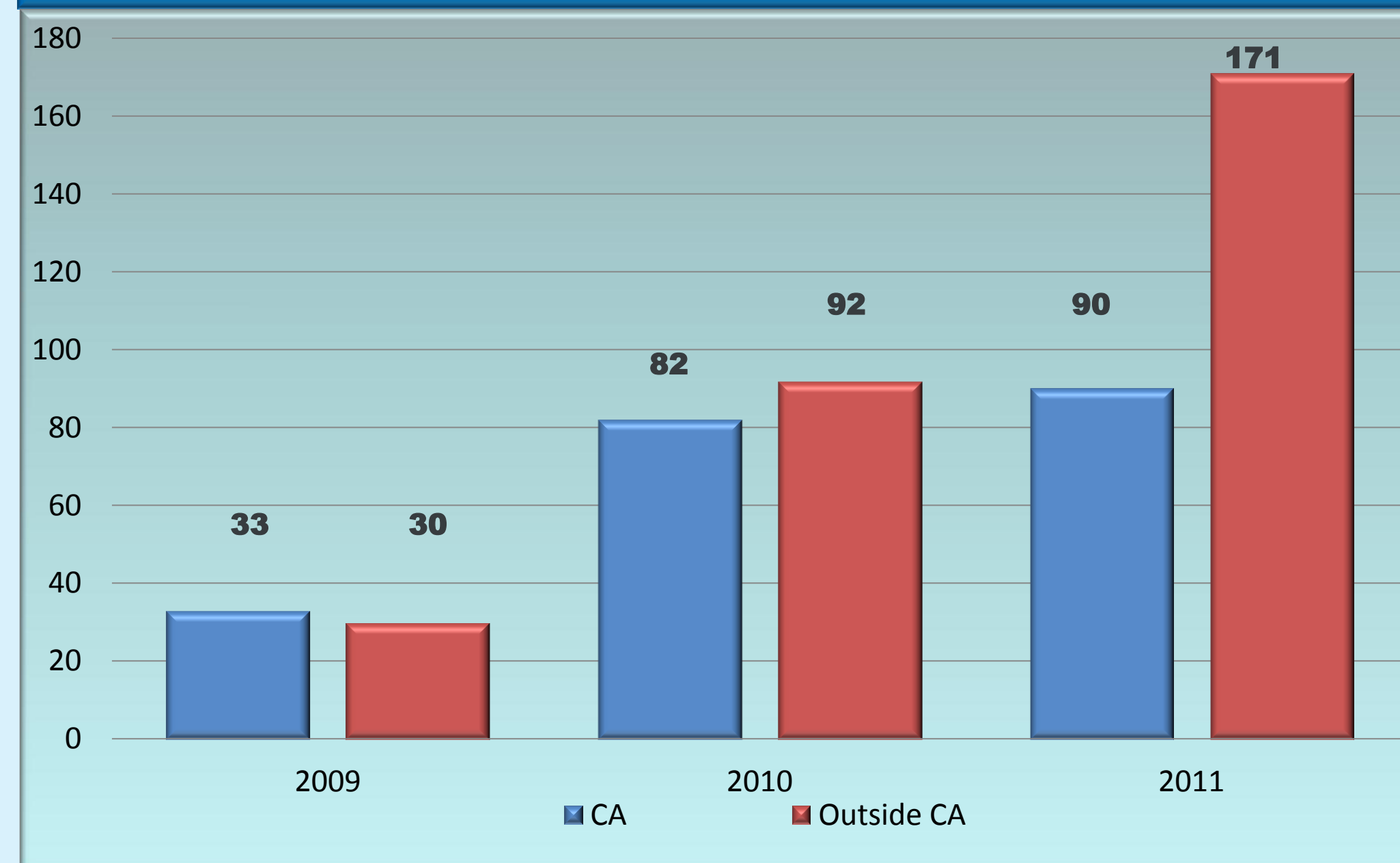
Methods

- Information from calls was collected over 2 ½ years
- Satisfaction surveys were sent out after the call (1= Strongly Disagree to 6 = Strongly Agree)
- Qualitative analysis of survey comments

Results

- 498 calls were received; almost 30% were for pain management (Table 1)
- Satisfaction survey results indicated high satisfaction with the hotline: 89% would use the hotline again and 88% would recommend it to others (Table 2)
- Repeat callers were almost 50% of all callers (Fig. 2)

Figure 1. Calls to PAL-MED CONNECT® hotline (calls from CA vs. outside of CA) (n=498)



“It was so helpful to talk with someone who is comfortable with specific uses of medications in the hospice/palliative medicine setting.”

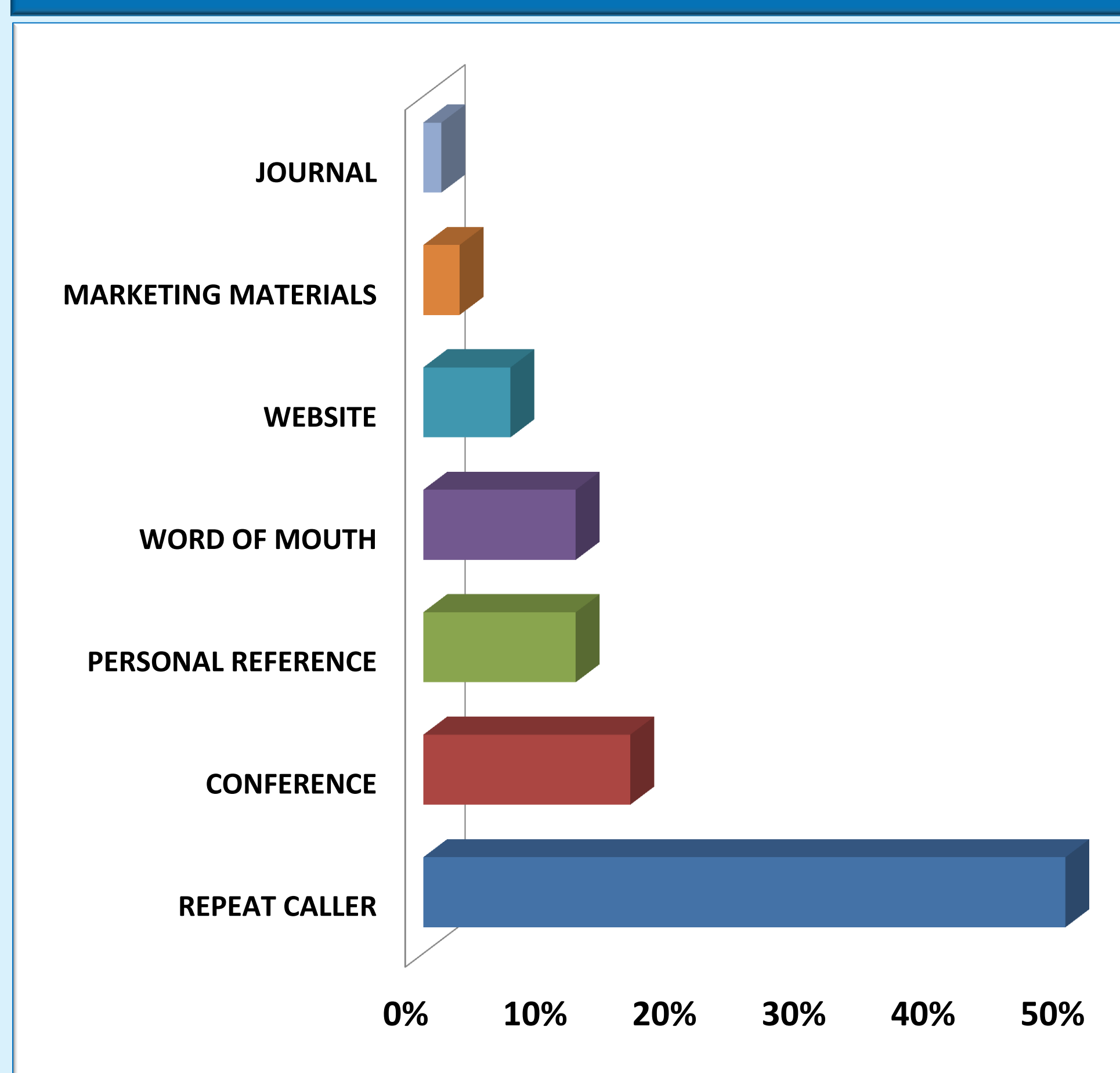
Table 2. Percent of callers who “strongly agreed” with hotline satisfaction (n=473)

Satisfaction Survey Questions	Strongly Agree
I would use this service again.	89%
I am likely to recommend this service to my colleagues.	88%
Overall, I was pleased with my consultation.	80%
The information I received was presented clearly and concisely.	79%
The information I received was up to date.	77%
The clinician with whom I spoke was knowledgeable about the topic discussed.	74%
All of my questions were answered thoroughly.	74%
The information I received was useful in managing the case I called about.	73%

Table 1. Topics of PAL-MED CONNECT® hotline calls (n=491)

Types of Calls	Number	%
Pain Management	144	29%
Hospice Questions	102	21%
Pharmacy/Medication	70	14%
General Palliative Care	69	14%
Cancer Management	53	11%
Dementia/Delirium	30	6%
Aromatherapy	15	3%
Pediatric Palliative Care	8	2%

Figure 2. Referral sources for PAL-MED CONNECT® hotline (n=420)



“I appreciated the opportunity to discuss a challenging case with a colleague in the field.”

Conclusions

PAL-MED CONNECT®:

- Became a valuable resource for palliative medicine specialists.
- Palliative medicine providers are often isolated in their solo practices and do not have access to resources.

“...having PAL-MED is invaluable in validating our clinical process.”

Future Directions

- Resources are needed for palliative medicine providers.
- Telephone hotlines are a valuable source of support for physicians, nurses and other healthcare professionals, but sustainability is a challenge.

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