

A Decade Under Review – Trends in Insurance Coverage and Wait Time for Gender-Affirming Top Surgery

Christina R. Kuhrau, MD¹, Ermina Lee, BS¹, Kiersten C. Woodyard De Brito, MD, MPH², Douglas Dembinski, MD², Sarah Pickle, MD³, Ryan Gobble, MD²

¹University of Cincinnati College of Medicine, Cincinnati, Ohio, USA. ²Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio, USA.

³Department of Family and Community Medicine, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio, USA.



Background

- The 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey demonstrated that:
 - 25% of respondents were denied coverage for hormones
 - 55% were denied coverage for surgical care within the year
- Legislative changes, updated state health policies, and expanded insurance coverage have increased access to gender-affirming mastectomy (“top surgery”)

Objective

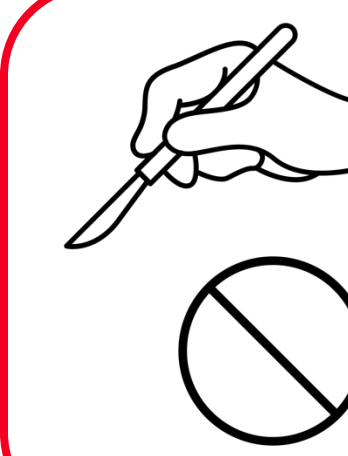
Characterize insurance denials and wait times for gender-affirming mastectomy in adults at a Midwestern academic center serving a tristate region

Methods

- Retrospective review of adult patients presenting for top surgery consultation at a single institution from January 2014 to December 2023
- Primary outcome:** Insurance denial rate
- Secondary outcome:** Time from consultation to surgery (wait time)
- Bivariate analyses

Results

- 130 patients included; majority identified as transgender men (TM; N=72), and 15.4% identified as nonbinary (NB; N=20)
- No significant difference in wait time between TM (8.2 months) and NB individuals (7 months) ($p=0.21$)
- NB individuals were *more* likely to have private insurance ($p=0.01$) and *less* likely to utilize gender-affirming hormone replacement therapy (HRT) ($p<0.01$)



Progression to surgery ($p=0.01$) and **wait time** ($p<0.01$) were significantly influenced by year of initial consultation

Public vs. private insurer type ($p=0.13-0.93$) and months on **gender-affirming hormone therapy** ($p=0.09$) did *not* significantly impact wait time

Figure 1: Insurance Denials and Surgical Progression Over Time

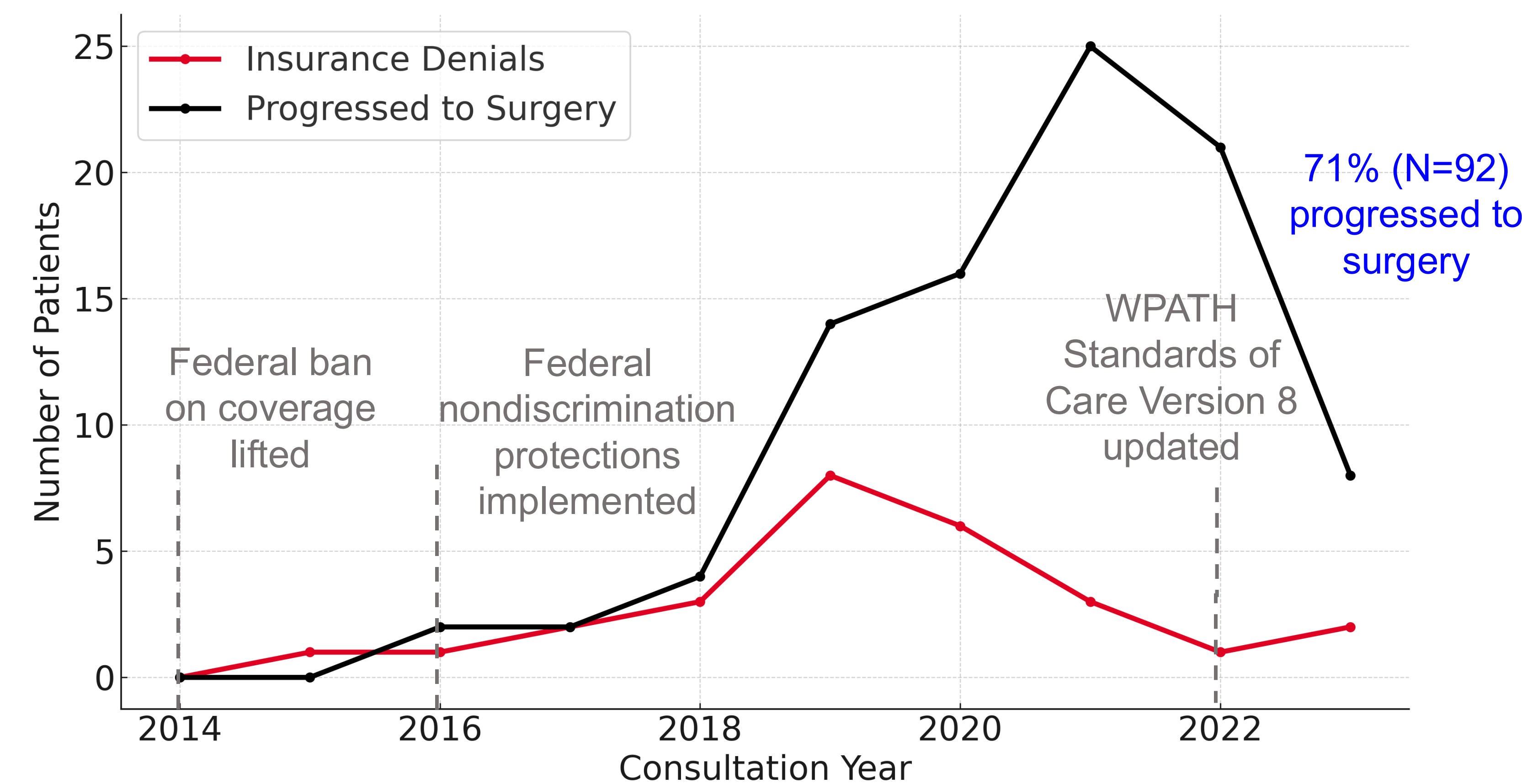
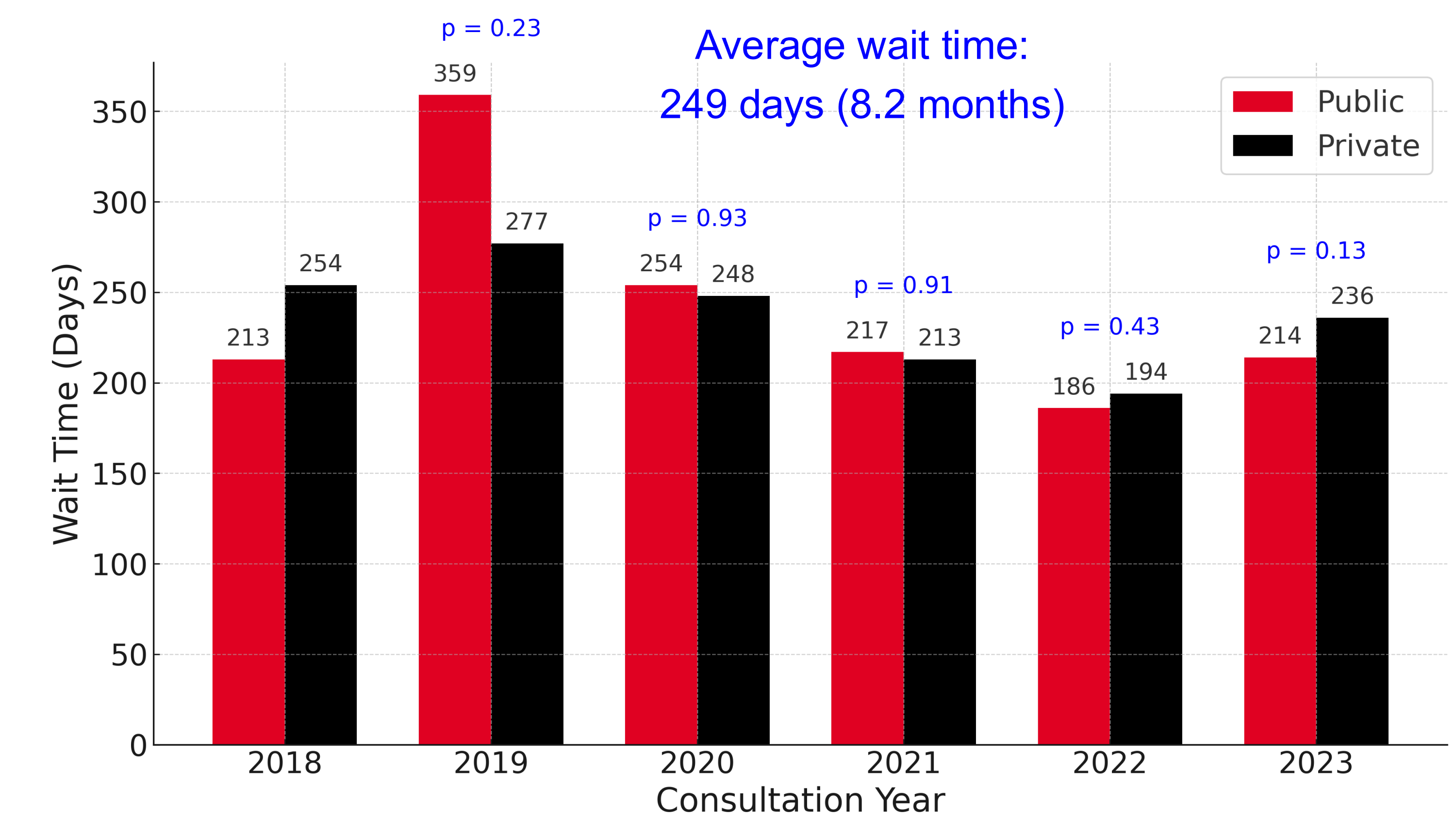


Figure 2: Comparison of Wait Time by Insurer Type



Conclusion

- These trends provide meaningful insights to patients, their surgeons, and allied health providers in planning for surgery
- This data reflects a decade of increased access to gender-affirming top surgery prior codified in state and federal policy – access that remains uncertain and currently subject to change