

Compliance with Age-appropriate Imaging Protocols in a Symptomatic Breast Clinic :A Closed-Loop Radiology Audit

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BACKGROUND

In symptomatic breast clinics, patients are assessed with breast pain and lump¹. Selecting the appropriate initial imaging modality based on patient age is recommended as inappropriate imaging leads to unnecessary ionizing radiation exposure in younger women and potential diagnostic delays or missed malignancies in older patients².

AIM

The aim of this audit is to determine compliance of breast clinic working with age-based imaging guidelines, implement workflow interventions, and then re-audit to close the quality loop.

STANDARDS

Departmental performance was assessed against established protocols of Best practice diagnostic guidelines for patients presenting with breast symptoms³ and Guidance on screening and symptomatic breast imaging Fifth edition by RCR⁴.

INDICATORS & TARGETS

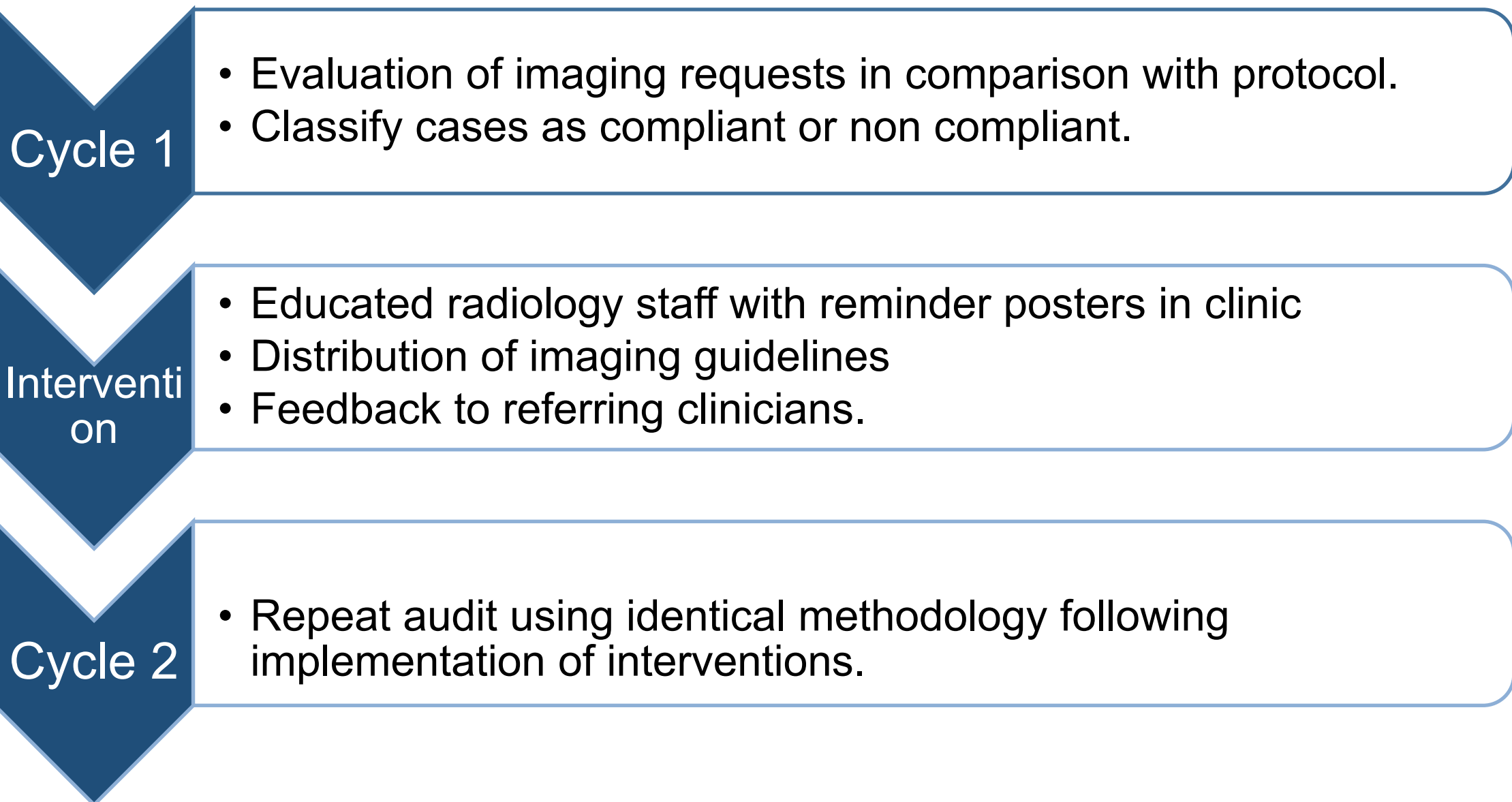
Young Patient (Age < 40): Target > 95% compliance. Initial imaging must be ultrasound alone. Mammography should be performed as an add-on.

Older Patient (Age ≥ 40): Target >95% compliance. Initial imaging must include dual-modality evaluation (Mammography + targeted Ultrasound).

METHODOLOGY

A retrospective, two-cycle closed-loop audit was performed across symptomatic breast clinic including adult female patients presenting with symptoms like palpable lump, pain and nipple discharge.

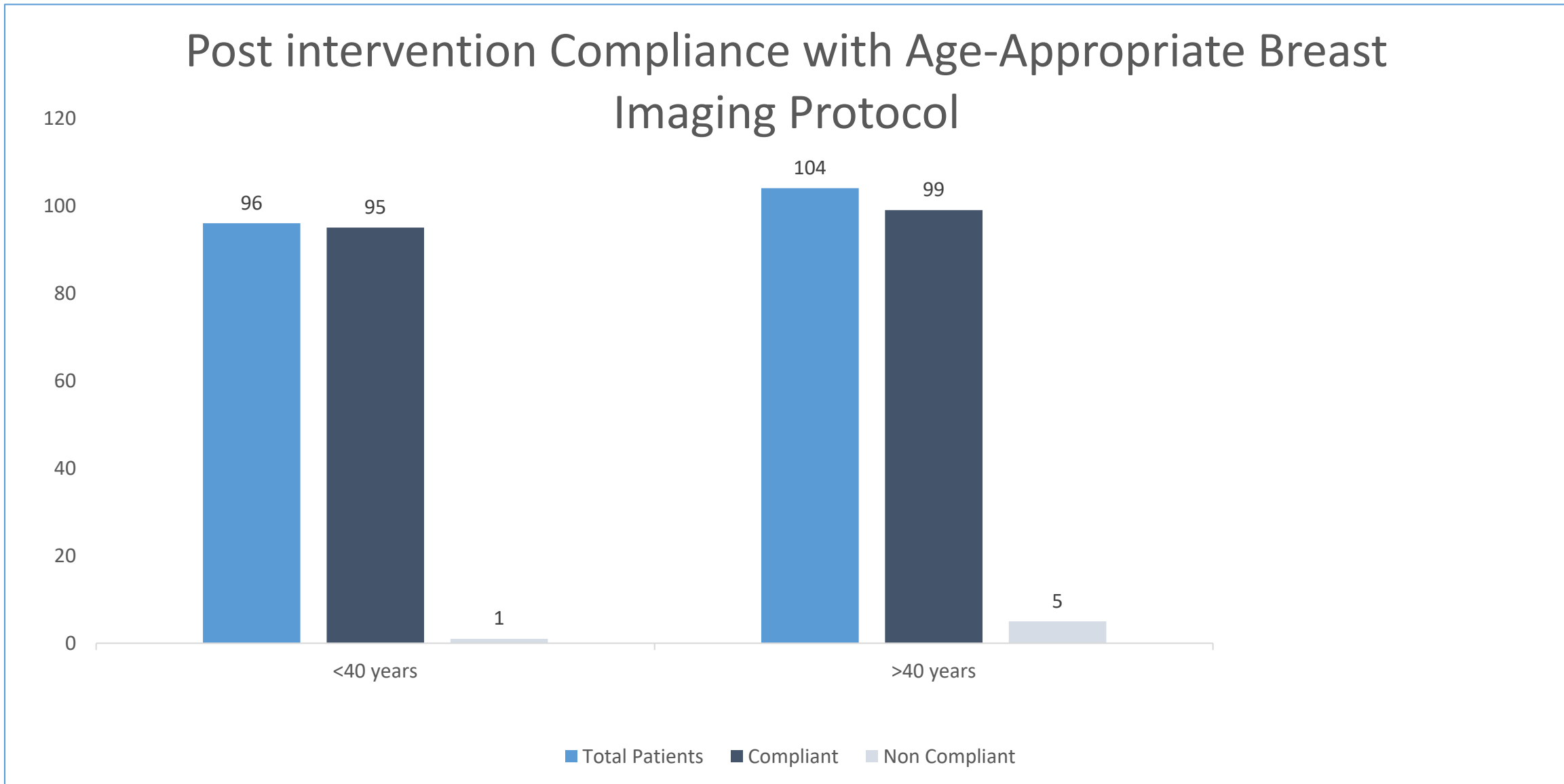
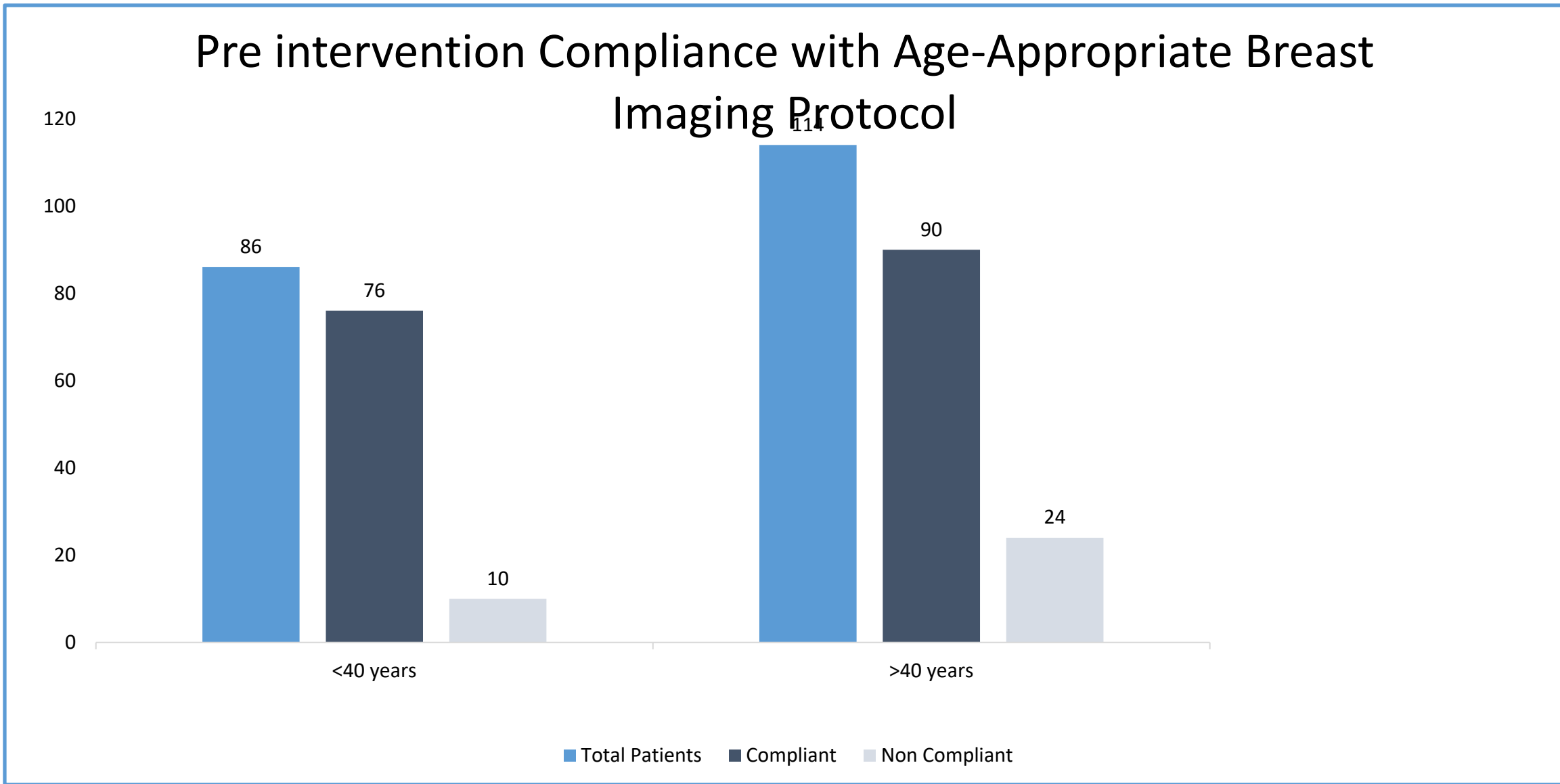
200 consecutive symptomatic cases analyzed in Cycle 1; 200 consecutive cases analyzed in Cycle 2.



RESULTS

Audit Improvement Summary

Measure	Pre-intervention	Post-intervention	Change
Total patients audited	200	200	—
Overall compliance	83.0%	97.0%	+14.0%
Non-compliant imaging	34 cases	6 cases	82.4% reduction
<40 years compliance	88.4%	99.0%	+10.6%
≥40 years compliance	78.9%	95.2%	+16.3%



CONCLUSION

It is concluded that following implementation of educational interventions and strictly following imaging guidelines, compliance with adherence to age-appropriate breast imaging pathway was improved which further reduced unnecessary imaging and help in efficient use of radiology sources while maintaining good patient care.

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