

The Impact of eConsults on the Provision of Dermatology Care by Current and Former Nurse Practitioner Residents

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INTRODUCTION

Nurse practitioners (NPs) often don't receive sufficient training in dermatology during their clinical training. Many enter practice with limited confidence to diagnose and treat common dermatologic conditions, leading them to refer patients for in-person dermatology care, which they may not have the ability to access. Providing additional training in dermatology is an important priority for NP residency programs, but options to do so are often limited.

BACKGROUND

- Community Health Center, Inc. (CHC) is an FQHC that has trained 170 NP residents since 2007.
- Most CHC patients wait more than 6-9 months for face-to-face (F2F) dermatology appointments.
- In prior work at CHC, eConsults between PCPs and dermatologists were shown to improve access and reduce wait times for care.
- NP residents at CHC now learn how to use eConsults for dermatology as part of their training.

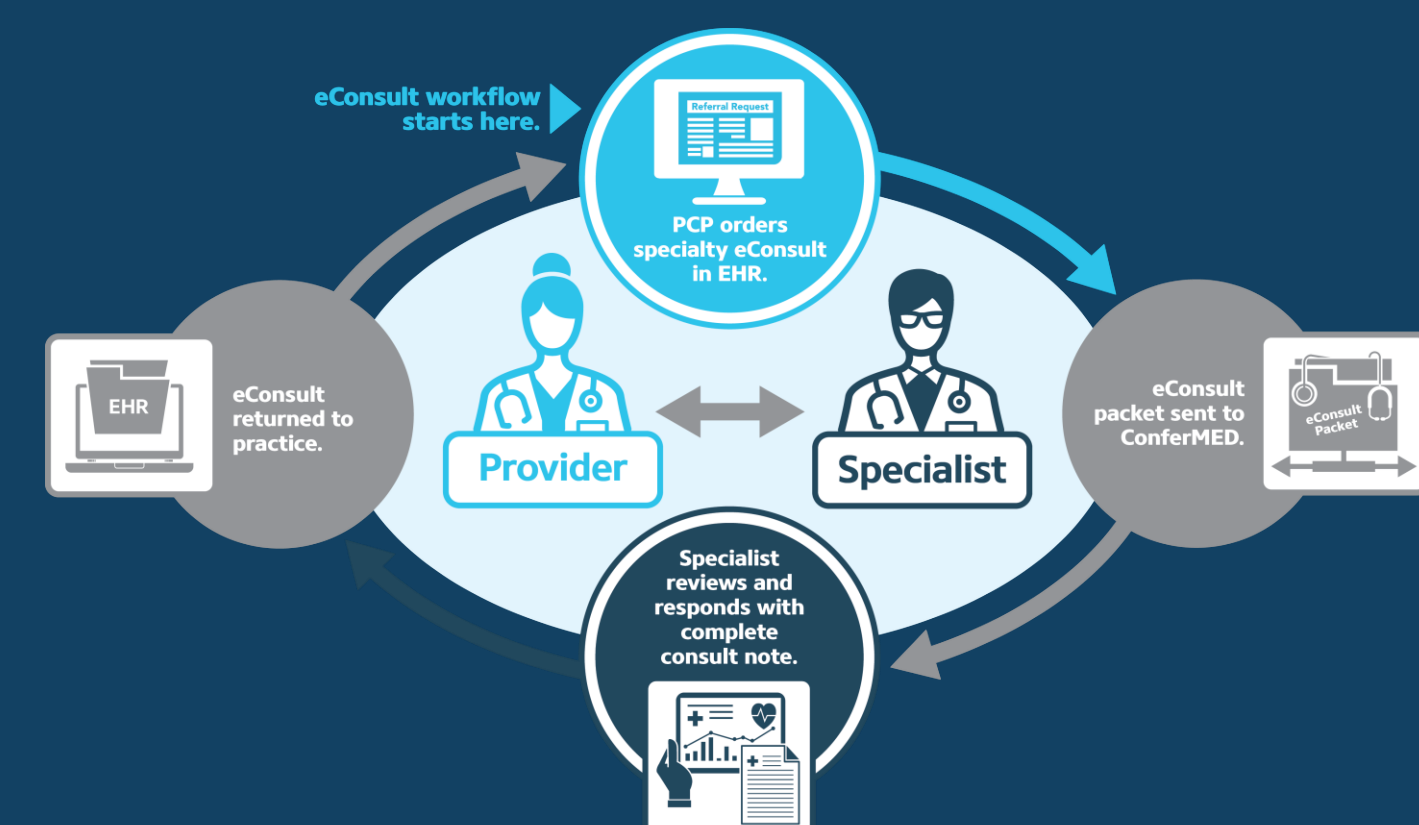


- Federally Qualified Health Center
- Founded in 1972
- 15 Locations
- 100,000 patients

METHODS:

We reviewed data on all dermatology referral requests submitted by current and former NP residents and all other PCPs during NP residency program year 2022-2023 (9/1/22-9/1/23).

eConsults:



- An eConsult for dermatology is a referral sent electronically to a specialist including appropriate PHI from the patient's chart, photos, and a formal consult question. The specialists provide a formal consult note in response.
- PCPs can often address the patient's complaint in primary care without the patient needing to see a specialist.

RESULTS

NP residents trained to use eConsults during residency managed a higher proportion of dermatology referrals with eConsults than other PCPs.

Former NP residents continued using eConsults at a higher rate than PCPs who were never NP residents.

Figure 1. Dermatology Referral Requests (N = 101 PCPs, 3764 requests)

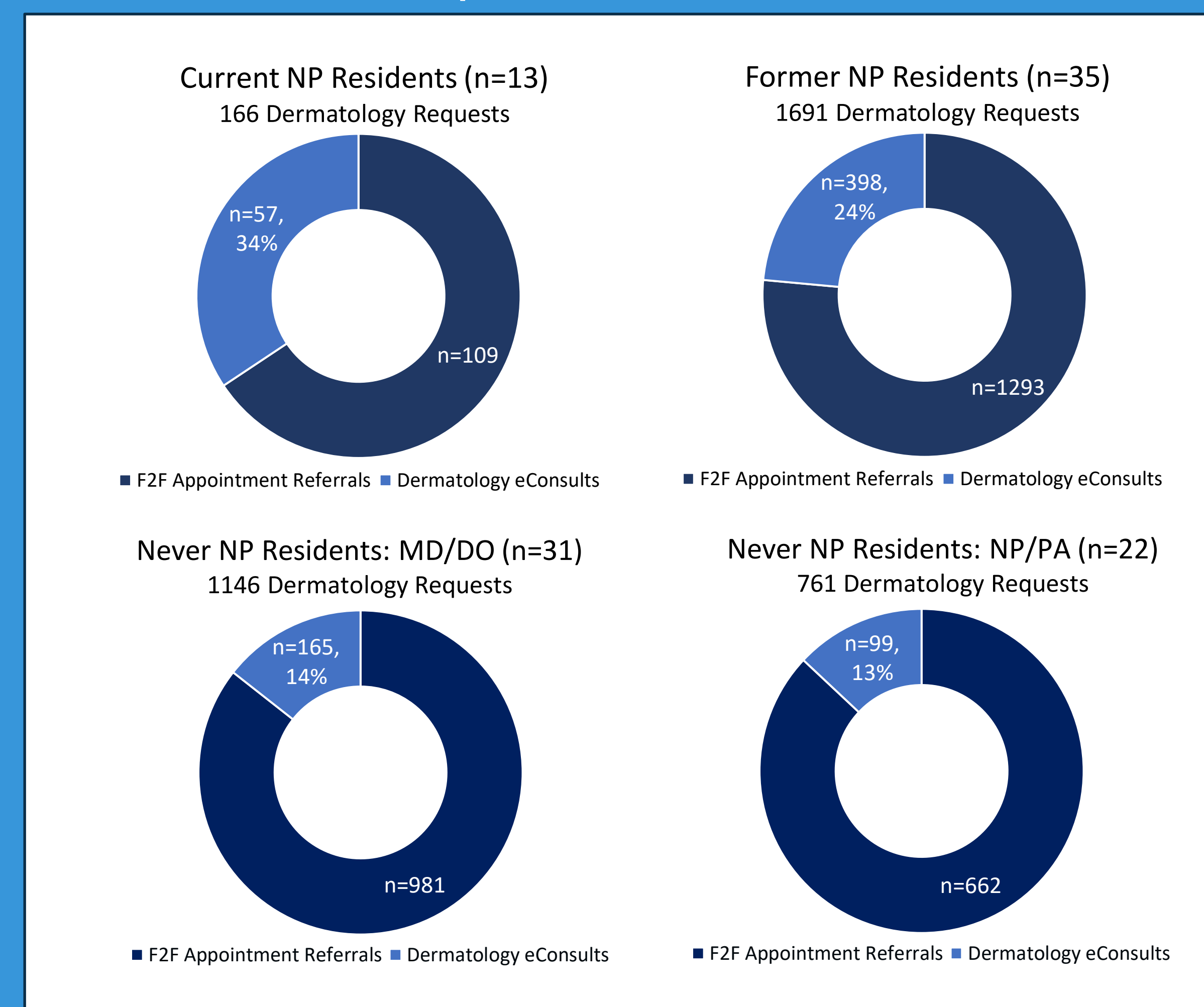


Fig. 1. 1 in 5 dermatology referral requests were for eConsult (n=719; 19%). Nearly 2/3 of dermatology eConsults (n=455, 63%) were placed by current or former NP residents.

Figure 2. NP Residency Programs' Needs

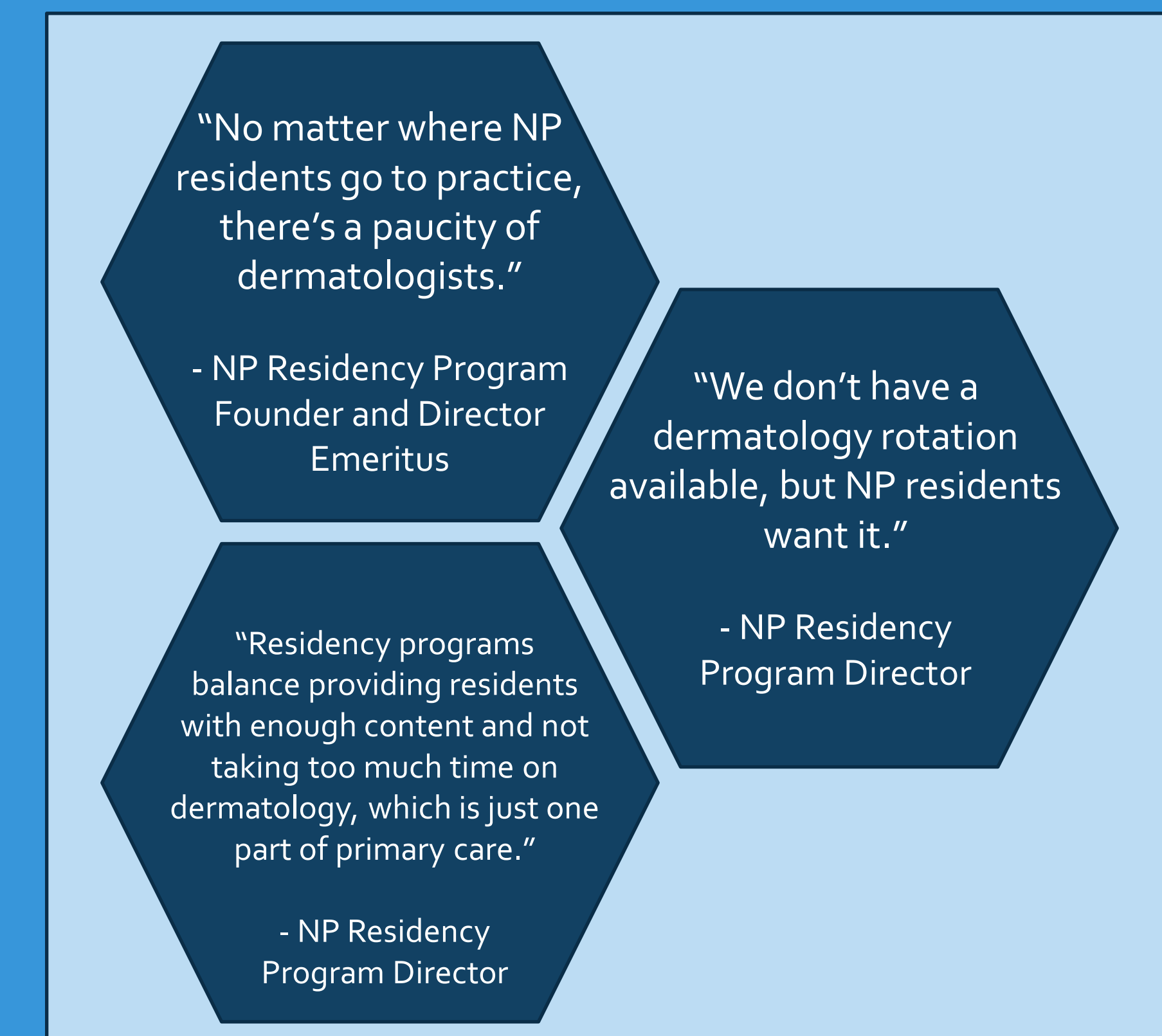


Fig. 2. NP Residency program leadership described the time and resource challenges involved in meeting residents' dermatology training needs.

Figure 3. Dermatology Referral Requests by NP Residents

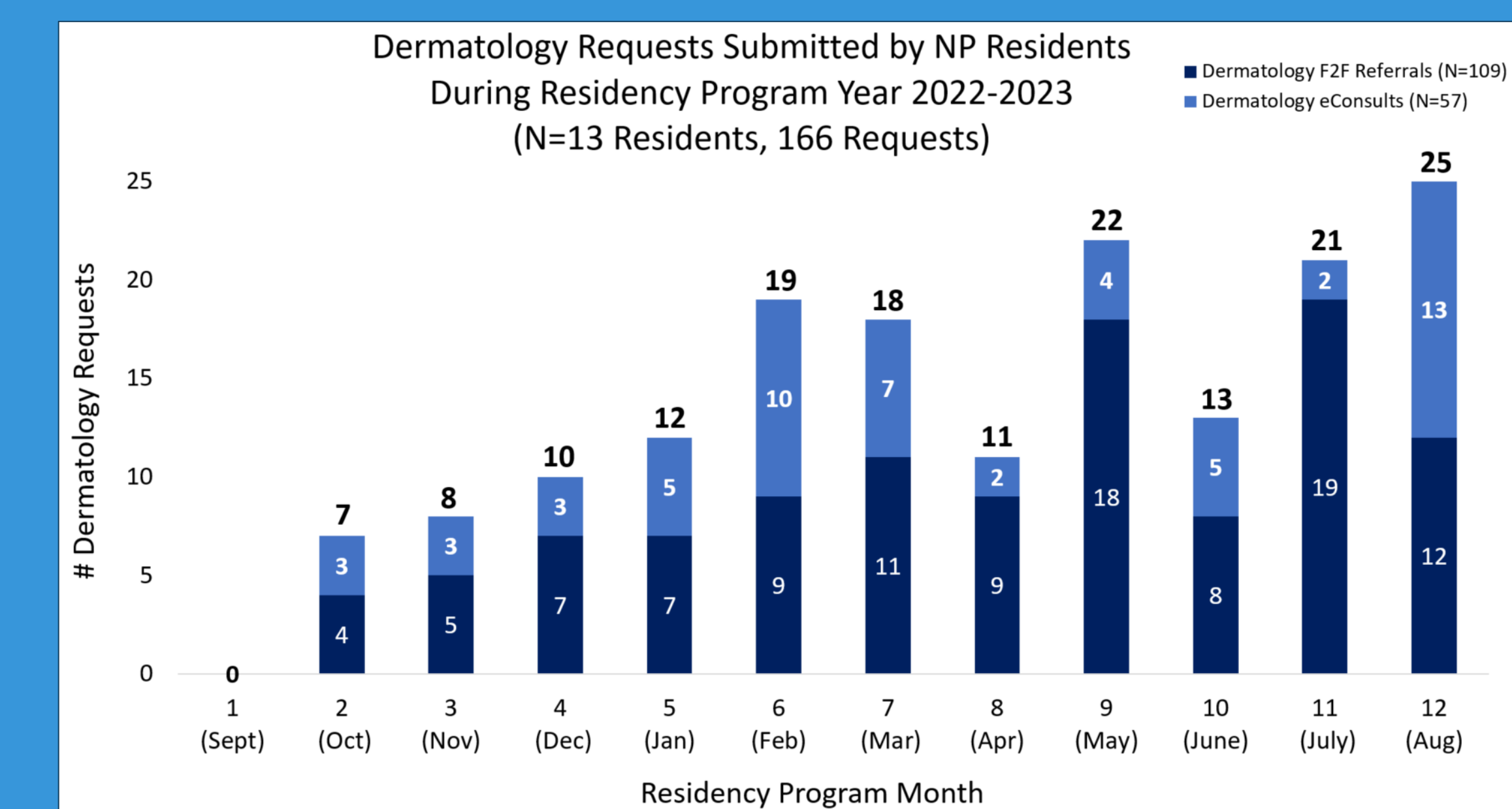


Fig. 3. NP residents without access to in-person shadowing were receptive to using dermatology eConsults to meet a large proportion of their dermatology referral needs.

Dermatology eConsults helped the NP residency program meet residents' dermatology referral and training needs and helped more patients receive the care they needed in primary care.

Table 1. Dermatology Referral Requests by All CHC PCPs, 9/1/22-9/1/23

Group	Visits	Dermatology Referral Requests n	Dermatology Referral Requests per 10,000 Visits	Dermatology F2F Appointment Referrals n (%)	Dermatology F2F Appointment Referrals per 10,000 Visits	Dermatology eConsults n (%)	Dermatology eConsults per 10,000 Visits
Current NP Resident (n=13)	10,896	166	152.3	109 (65.7%)	100.0	57 (34.3%)	52.3
Former NP resident (n=35)	85,815	1691	197.1	1293 (76.5%)	150.7	398 (23.5%)	46.4
Never NP Resident - MD/DO (n=31)	86,223	1146	132.9	981 (85.6%)	113.8	165 (14.4%)	19.1
Never NP Resident - NP/PA (n=22)	47,888	761	158.9	662 (87.0%)	138.2	99 (13.0%)	20.7
TOTAL	230,822	3764	170.6	3045 (80.9%)	135.7	719 (19.1%)	34.9

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