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The Smoke-free ticket: a powerful prevention tool at the UMG¹



Background

Smoking cessation treatment should be attempted at every opportunity and hospitalization is a unique window of opportunity. For clinics not having a specialized smoking cessation team, referrals provide an efficient method to connect smoking patients to free-of-charge and low-threshold support services like Quitlines. Contacting patients systematically and proactively is a prerequisite to reach everyone who could benefit and especially patients who would not ask for support to quit smoking.

Methods



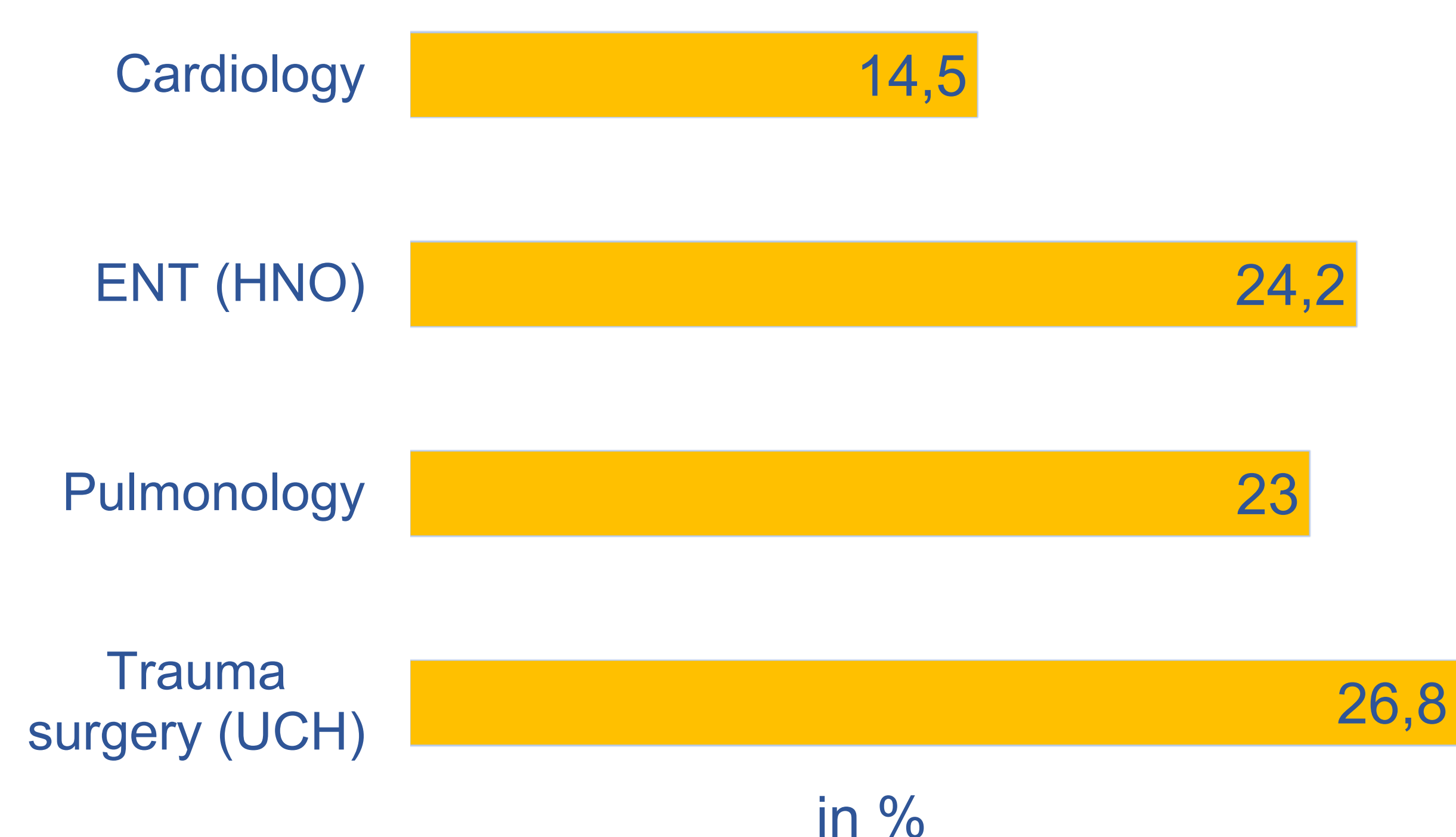
The proactive screening of patients for the “Smokefree-ticket” was adopted by four UMG-clinics, while pregnant women or those who continue to smoke after giving birth, are contacted by our study assistants after notification by the Clinic for Gynaecology and Obstetrics. Do date, almost 600 patients were referred to the German Quitline. After discharge, the patients will be contacted by trained specialists. In up to six proactive phone calls, they advise smokers seeking support in smoking cessation, former smokers experiencing a relapse crisis, and information seekers who intend to quit.

Results

A number of 1988 patients were screened for smoking between April 2023 and March 2024 and 440 smokers were identified. The percentages of smokers varied between the participating UMG-clinics (Figure 1).

From 440 smokers, 180 (40,9%) were referred to the German Quitline. The agreement was higher for women than for men (50% vs. 36%) and lower for patients aged ≥ 60 years compared to those aged < 60 years (36% vs. 44%).

Figure 1: Percentage of smokers per 100 screened patients



Conclusion

With 2000 patient contacts annually, the UMG meanwhile ranks 3rd-best out of 58 participating hospitals in Germany.. This project can serve as a benchmark in Germany towards commitment of a University Hospital to become a leading health-promoting institution contributing to prevention of adverse outcomes and shifts in social norms such as non-smoking. The commitment of other UMG-clinics is highly welcomed.

¹ The “Smokefree-ticket” is offered in the Clinic and Polyclinic for ENT Diseases, the Clinic and Polyclinic for Internal Medicine B (Cardiology and Pulmonology), the Clinic and Polyclinic for Trauma Surgery, Reconstructive Surgery and Rehabilitation Medicine, and in the Clinic for Gynaecology and Obstetrics.