Decentralized dispensing of ART at private pharmacies: Follow-up of patients enrolled in this model in four provinces of Mozambique and health providers' perceptions of the challenges and benefits.
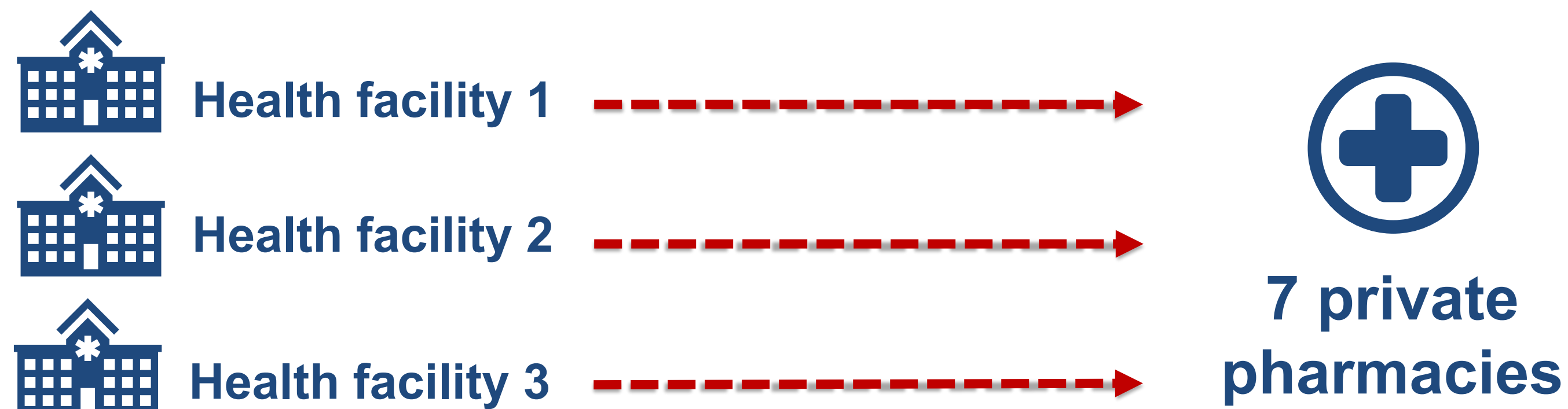
J. Moiane[1], B. Panguane[2], J. Saturnino[1], J. Alexandre[1], I. Joaquim[1], M. Prieto[1]

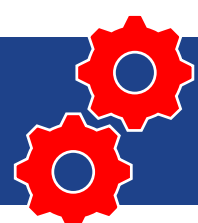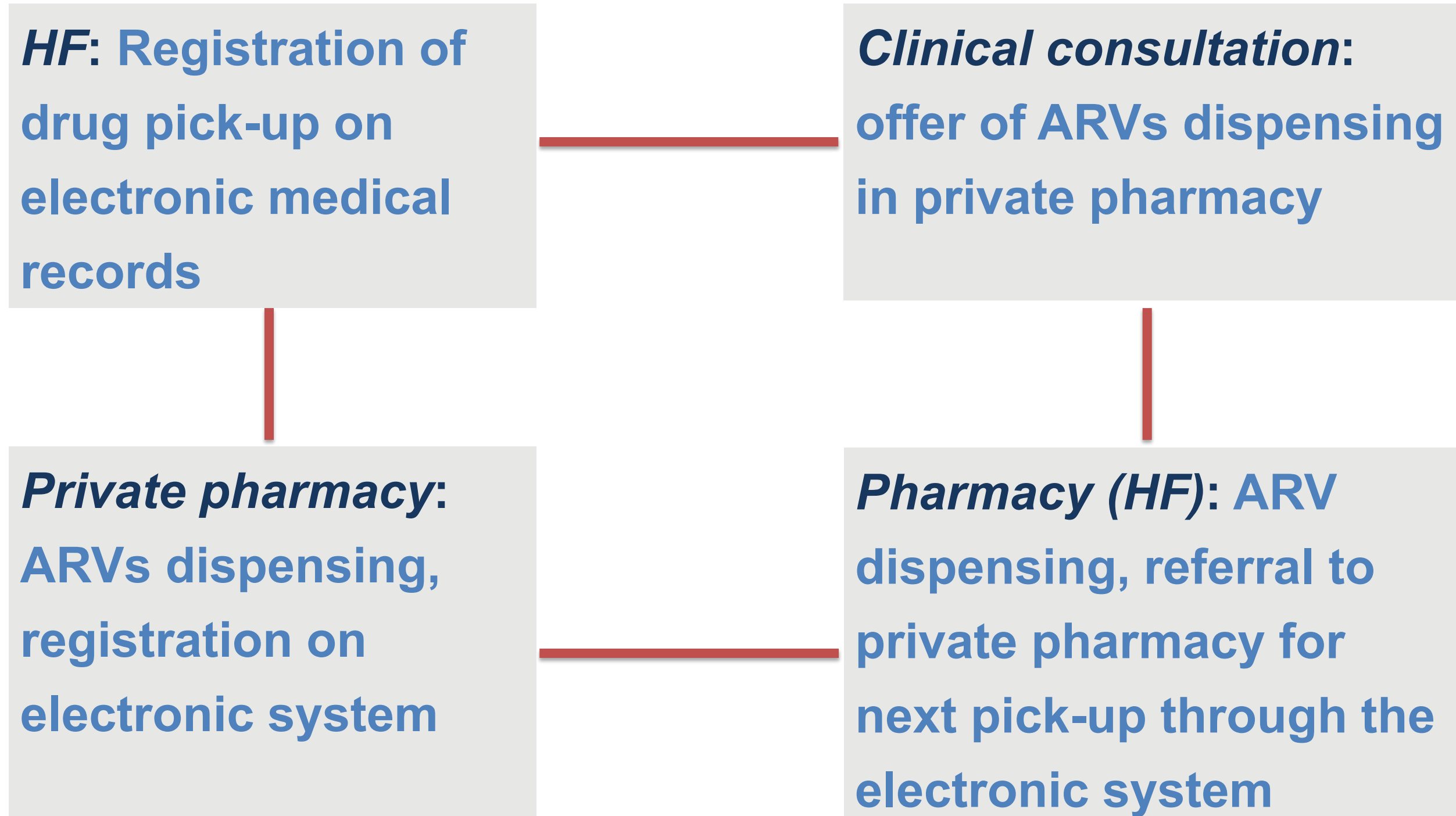[1] ECHO Project, Mozambique/ThinkWell; [2] ECHO Project, Mozambique/Abt Associates

BACKGROUND

In response to the urgent need to expand differentiated models of services in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, USAID's ECHO (Efficiencies for Clinical HIV Outcomes) project started to implement decentralized dispensing (DD) of antiretrovirals (ARVs) through private pharmacies (PF) in October 2021. This study followed up the patients enrolled in this strategy and explored health provider's perspectives about this model.
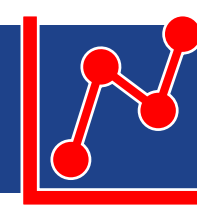
Health facility 1 - - - - - - ->
Health facility 2 - - - - - - -> 7 private pharmacies
Health facility 3 - - - - - - ->

Referral process:

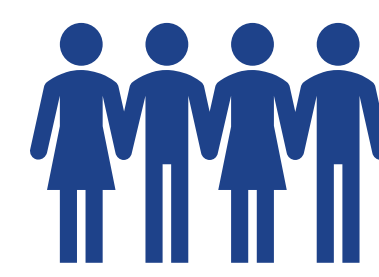| **HF**: Registration of drug pick-up on electronic medical records	**Clinical consultation**: offer of ARVs dispensing in private pharmacy
Private pharmacy: ARVs dispensing, registration on electronic system	**Pharmacy (HF)**: ARV dispensing, referral to private pharmacy for next pick-up through the electronic system

METHODS

This is a mix-methods study, including: (1) quantitative, observational, cross-sectional study of ART patients enrolled in DD from October 1, 2021, and followed up until September 20, 2022, from 12 health facilities among the four provinces supported by ECHO; and (2) qualitative study using semi-structured interviews with health providers from health facilities (HF) and PF (a total of 36 health providers were interviewed).
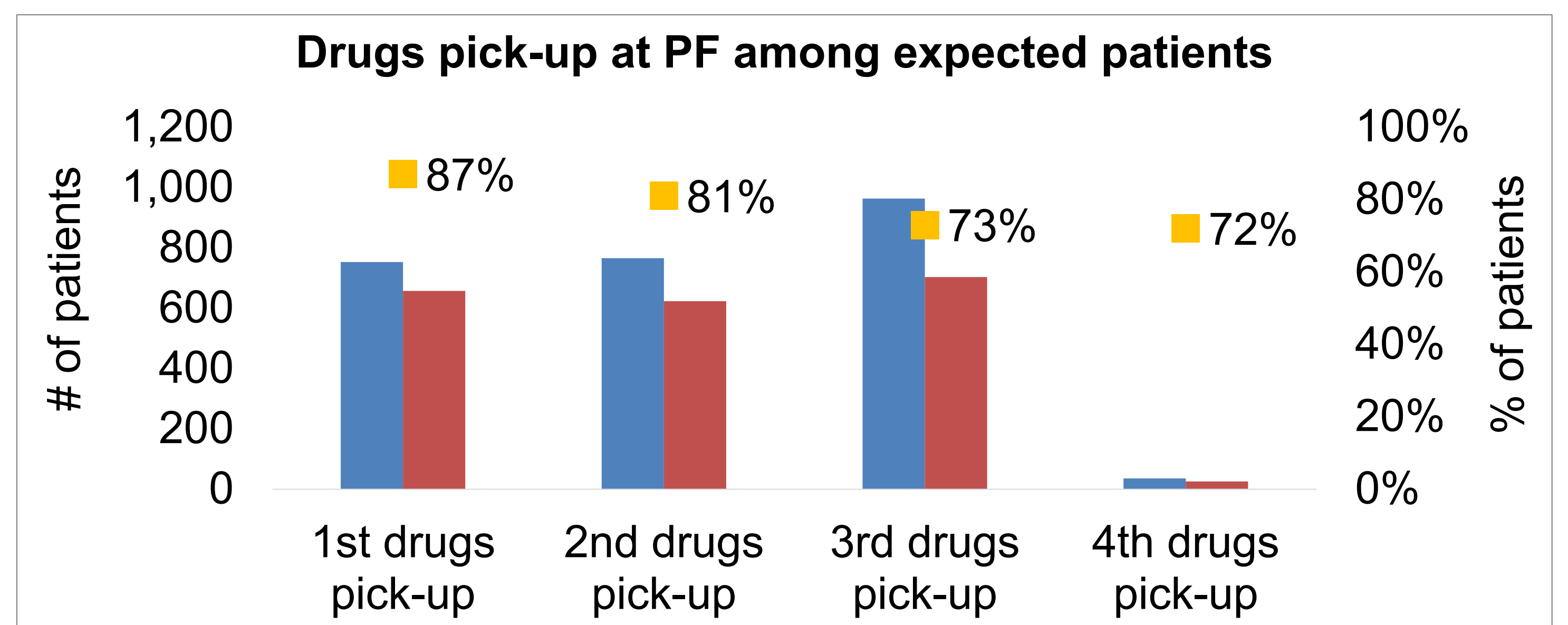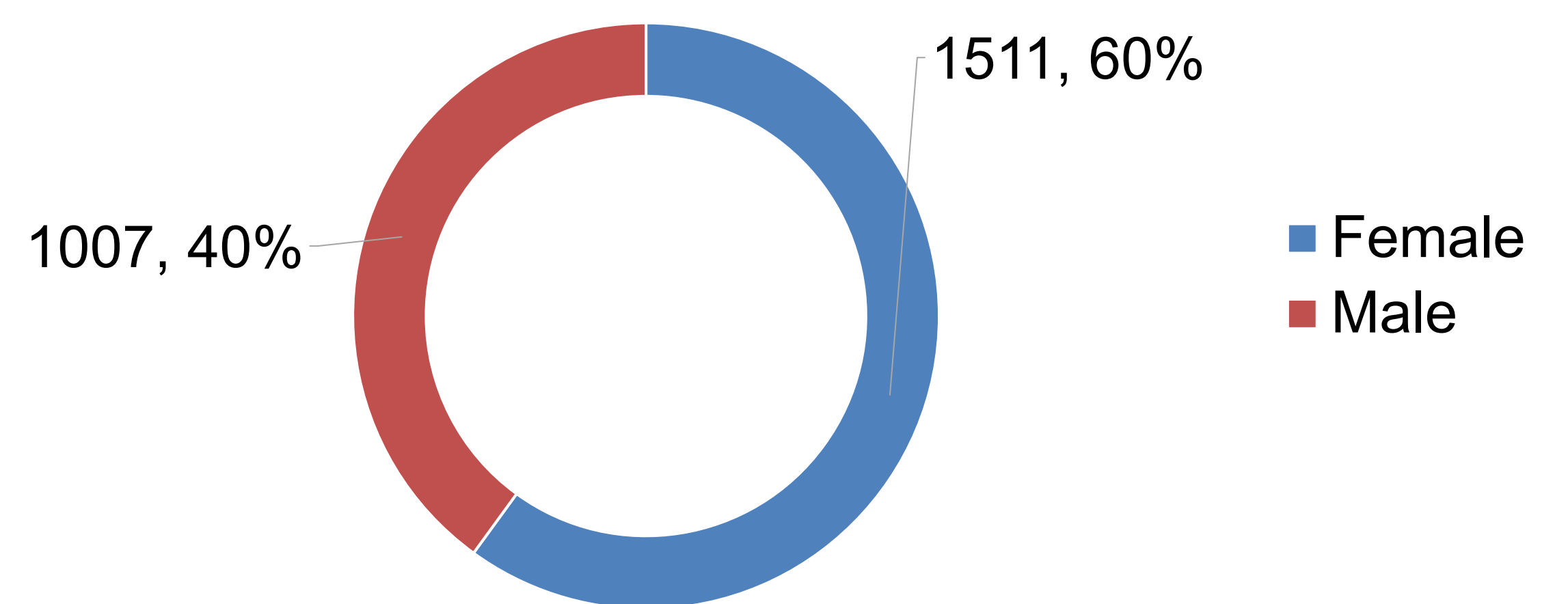
CQUIN 6th Annual Meeting
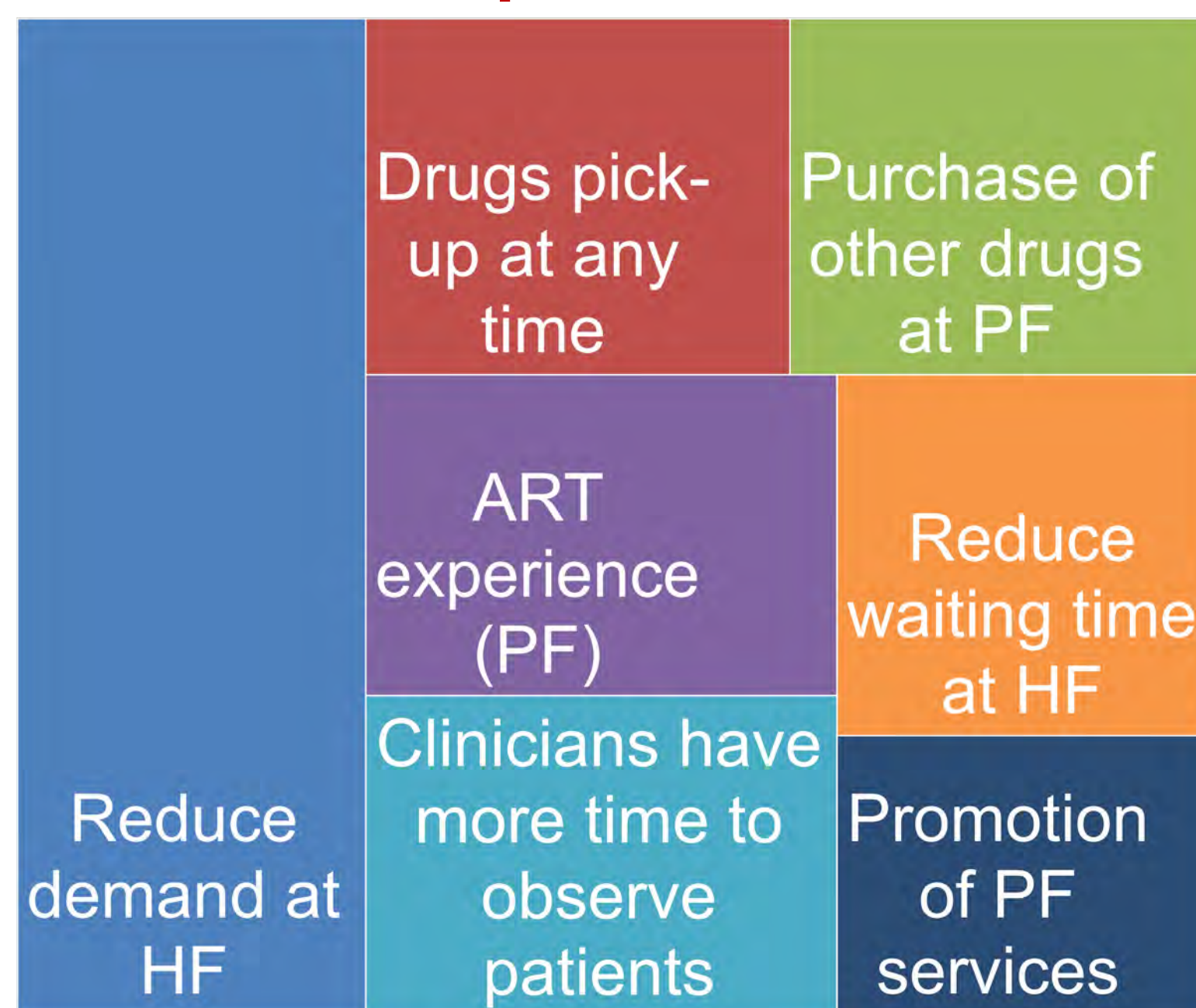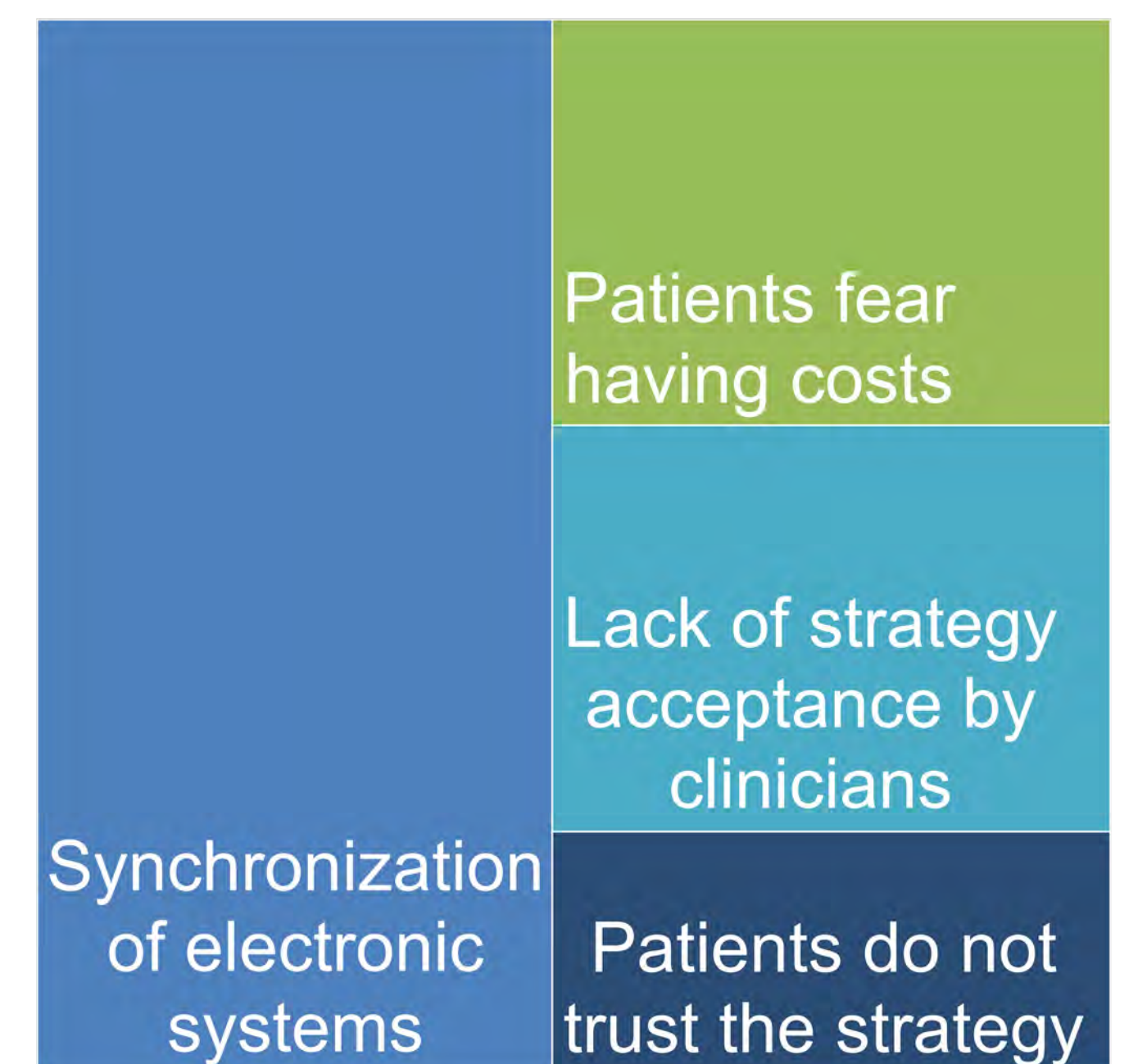December 6-9, 2022
Durban, South Africa

RESULTS

2,518 patients were enrolled in DD
(99.9% were adults >=15 years old; median 40 years old)

1511, 60% Female
1007, 40% Male

Drugs pick-up at PF among expected patients

1st drugs pick-up: 87%
2nd drugs pick-up: 81%
3rd drugs pick-up: 73%
4th drugs pick-up: 72%

Benefits for patients, HF and PF

- Reduce demand at HF
- Drugs pick-up at any time
- Purchase of other drugs at PF
- ART experience (PF)
- Reduce waiting time at HF
- Clinicians have more time to observe patients
- Promotion of PF services

Challenges

- Patients fear having costs
- Lack of strategy acceptance by clinicians
- Synchronization of electronic systems
- Patients do not trust the strategy

DISCUSSION

There are challenges in implementation, as this is a new strategy; the benefits seem consistent for patients, health facilities and private pharmacies. Other studies will be needed to understand patient's acceptability and cost-effectiveness of this strategy.