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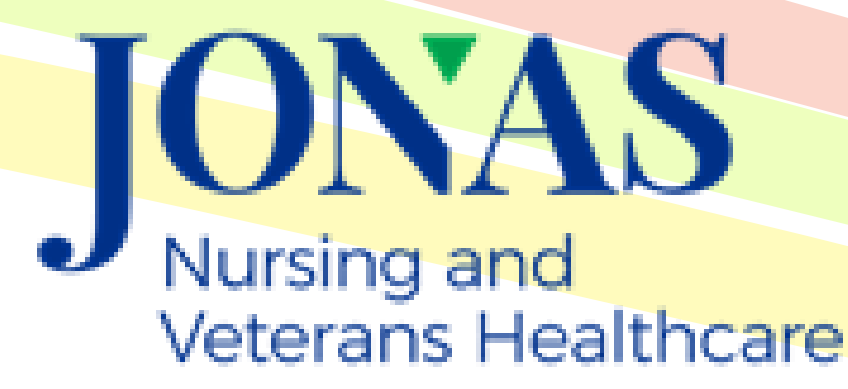
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THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT  
COLLEGE OF NURSING  
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# Screening for Palliative Care Services in an Assisted Living Facility

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## Background:

Palliative care services remain under-utilized, even as evidence suggests that early palliative care leads to positive health outcomes, reduced ED visits, and substantial cost savings. Barriers include a lack of knowledge of palliative care services in the community, and under-utilization of validated assessment tools, including a symptom checklist.

Based on the evidence, the utilization of palliative care assessment tool in a community setting holds the potential to raise awareness in palliative care in non-clinical as well as in primary care setting and thereby increase access to palliative care to improve the quality of life.

## Purpose:

1. Determine whether the integration of validated community-based palliative care screening tool in an assisted living community will identify community-dwelling older adults with unmet palliative care needs.
2. Determine if the use of the tool in a non-clinical setting could lead to a referral for palliative care consultation.
3. Educate and empower nurses and residential care staff on basic knowledge and skills of palliative care and the utilization of a validated palliative care screening tool;

## Rationale:

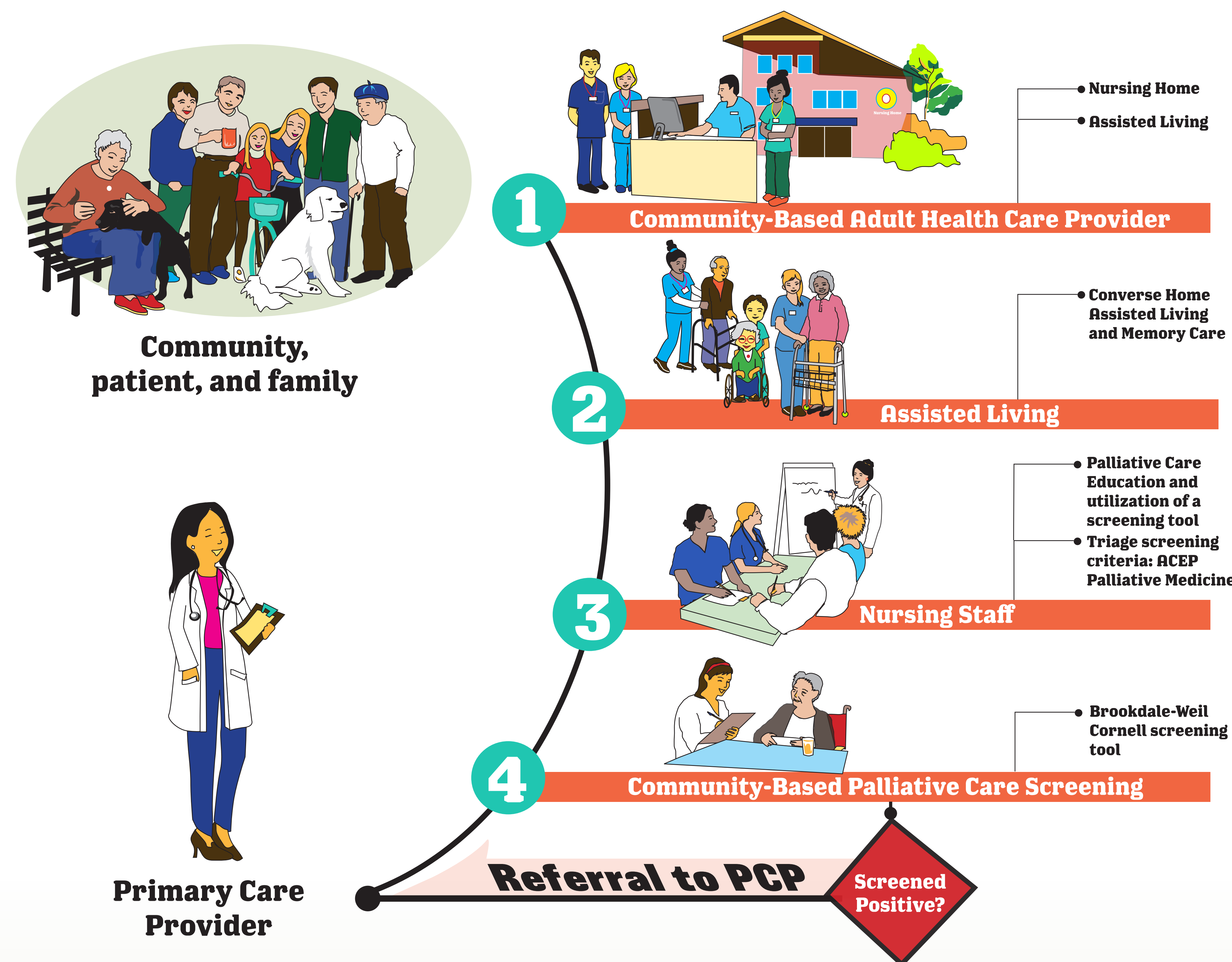
1. Palliative care screening may help improve palliative care knowledge among the community, nurses, and staff and promote the use of social support.
2. Screening for palliative care needs for individuals with less education, higher rates of medical comorbidities, and living alone in the community might improve their health outcomes and quality of life.
3. The use of a validated screening tool and palliative care knowledge training by community-based providers may assist in the identification of adults with unmet palliative care needs and will address the barriers of lack of screening tools and coordination of services in ways that primary care and hospital providers are unable to do.

## Keywords:

palliative care, screening, assessment, older adult, community-based, assisted living

## Methods:

A screening tool developed by Brookdale-Weill Cornell Palliative Care Consortium was used to identify potential candidates for a palliative care consult. Using ACEP Palliative Care toolkit criteria, candidates were selected from the health records of 63 residents living in an assisted living facility. Nurses received education on basic skills in palliative care and the use of the 22-item screening tool. A positive screen is determined if a participant reports experiencing two or more items within a domain "all the time" in at least two domains. Each resident's primary care provider was notified, and positive results were shared.



## Results:

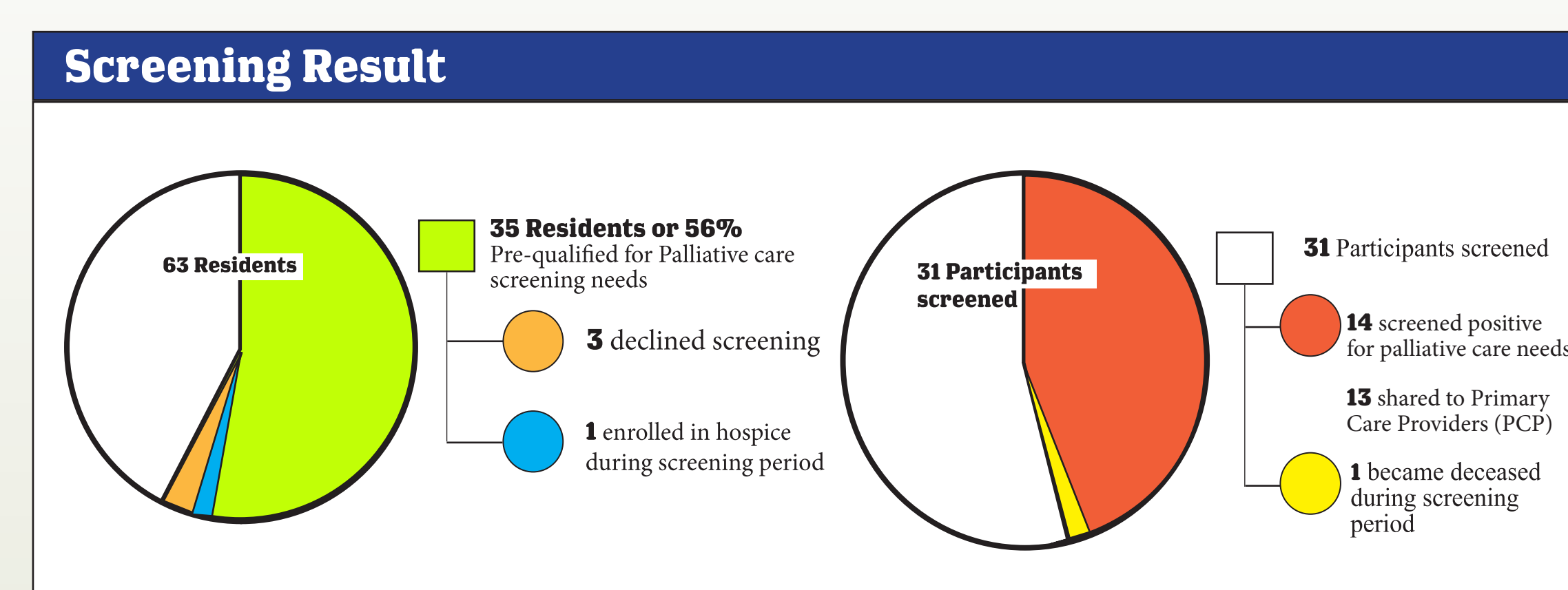
Of the 31 residents screened, 45% screened positive for palliative care needs, and 100% consented to referral to primary care providers for a palliative care consult. Inclusion of the screening tool in the new resident admission packet was a resulting practice change adopted by the facility.

## Ethical Consideration:

1. Participation to screening is completely voluntary. A consent to share results to PCP was obtained before screening;
2. Participation of nurses and residential care assistants in education intervention and screening implementation is voluntary, and
3. Participation or non-participation of staff will not be shared with Converse Home administration to decrease the risk of impact on performance evaluations.

## Limitation:

1. Lack of standardization of screening and interprofessional approach among nursing staff due to varied level of education between RN and LPN;
2. The study is confined to only one residential home.



## Conclusion and Implication:

Palliative care screening in an assisted living facility can increase palliative care consultation and utilization among older adults with chronic illnesses. Implications of utilizing this screening tool are: enhance quality of life for older adults living in assisted living facilities, empower older adult-community clinicians, and improve the coordination of care with primary care.

CONVERSE HOME Date: \_\_\_\_\_ D.O.B: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Consent to share info with provider:  Yes  No

**Brookdale-Weill Cornell Palliative Care Screening Tool**

Physical symptoms	Never	Sometimes	All the time
Currently, are you bothered by the following?			
1. Pain or physical discomfort	0	1	2
2. Feeling tired, fatigued or having low energy	0	1	2
3. Difficulty standing or walking	0	1	2
4. Difficulty sleeping (sleeping too much or can't sleep)	0	1	2
5. Shortness of breath	0	1	2
Emotional concerns	Never	Sometimes	All the time
Currently, are you experiencing the following?			
1. Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge	0	1	2
2. Not being able to stop or control worrying	0	1	2
3. Having little interest or pleasure in usual activities	0	1	2
4. Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless	0	1	2
5. Worried about being dependent, or a burden, on friends or family	0	1	2
6. Feeling like there is no one in your life that you can talk to	0	1	2
7. Having conflicts with friends or family	0	1	2
Goals of care	Never	Sometimes	All the time
Currently, are you experiencing the following?			
1. Feeling overwhelmed about any medical treatment	0	1	2
2. Feeling confused about your medical care	0	1	2
3. Feeling uncomfortable asking questions about your care	0	1	2
4. Feeling like you need access to more medical providers (Drs., nurses)	0	1	2
5. Feeling like you need more information about other community resources	0	1	2
Long-term care planning	No	Yes	Don't know
Have you given thought to how you want to be cared for when your illness(es) advance/as you age?	2	1	2
Have you talked with anyone about how you want to be cared for?	2	1	2
If YES, do you have a document that indicates what your wishes are and who will make decisions for you?	2	1	2
Do you have a Health Care Proxy? Note: A "Health Care Proxy" is a document with which an individual appoints someone to legally make healthcare decisions for them, in case they are ever unable to make and carry out the healthcare decisions.	2	1	2
Have you completed a Living Will? Advanced Directive? Note: A "Living Will" is a document that lets people state their wishes for end-of-life medical care, in case they ever become unable to communicate their wishes.	2	1	2
<b>Participants screened positive if they reported experiencing 2 or more items within a domain "all the time" in at least 2 domains. For example, if a patient experiences all of the time, they were considered to have screened positive for unmet palliative care needs (Kozlov, et al., 2018).</b>	<b>RESULT</b>		

**FOR PROVIDER ONLY**

(Pls. check) Refer for Palliative Care Consult?  Yes  No

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Provider's Name & Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Please fax a copy of this completed form to Converse Home, Fax No. 802-864-4932

Brookdale-Weill Cornell screening tool. Use with permission from Ghesquiere, A., Gardner, D. S., McAfee, C., Kenien, C., Capezuti, E., Kozlov, E., ... Reid, M. C., 2018.

Illustration by Maria Delia Crosby  
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