

The value of a “second opinion” ultrasound scan in pregnancy of unknown location

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Introduction

Pregnancy of unknown location (PUL) is a common transient ultrasound (U/S) diagnosis in early pregnancy. Prolonged follow up may be required before the location of the pregnancy is established, which results in patient’s inconvenience and anxiety, as well as considerable healthcare costs.

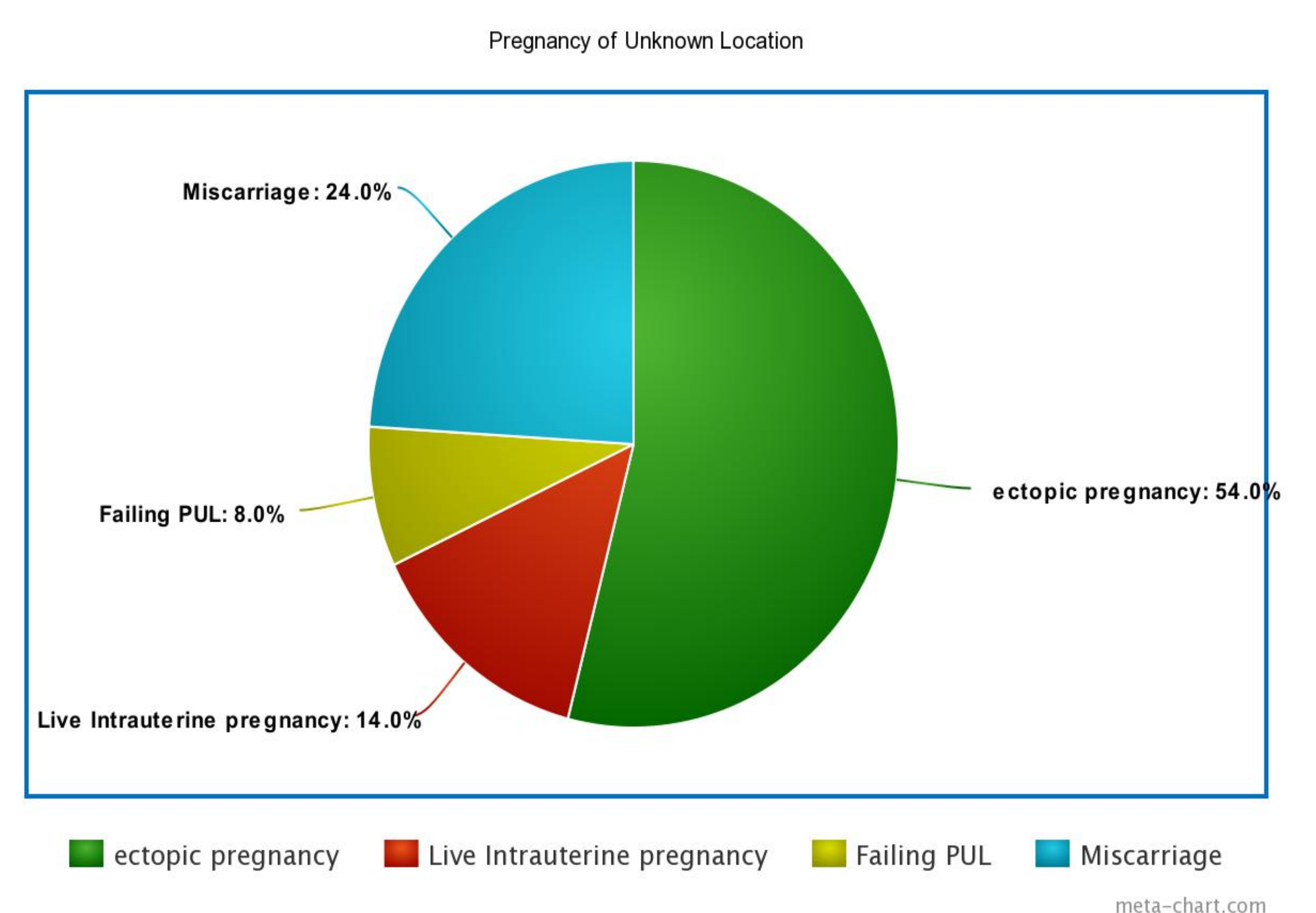
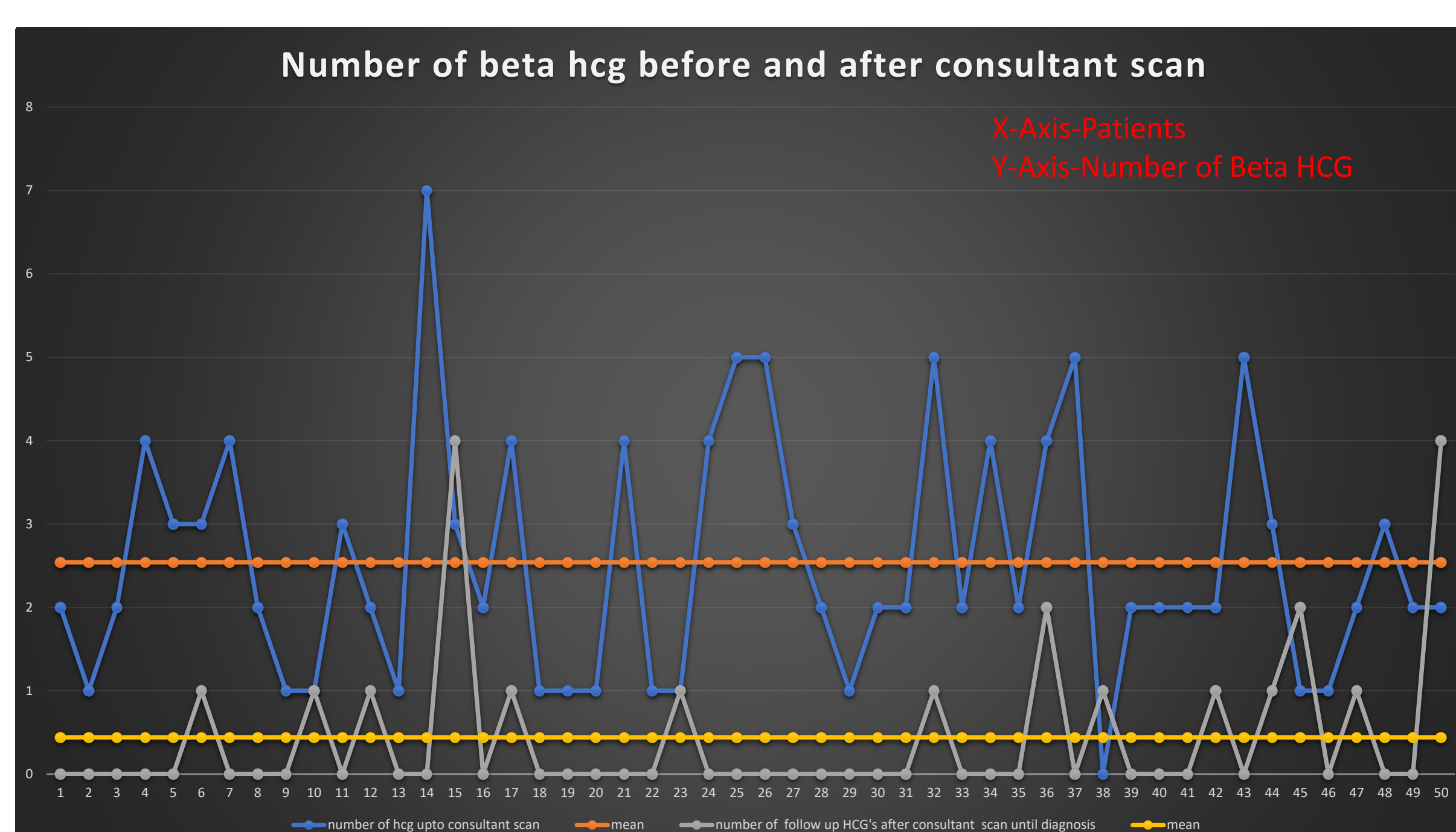
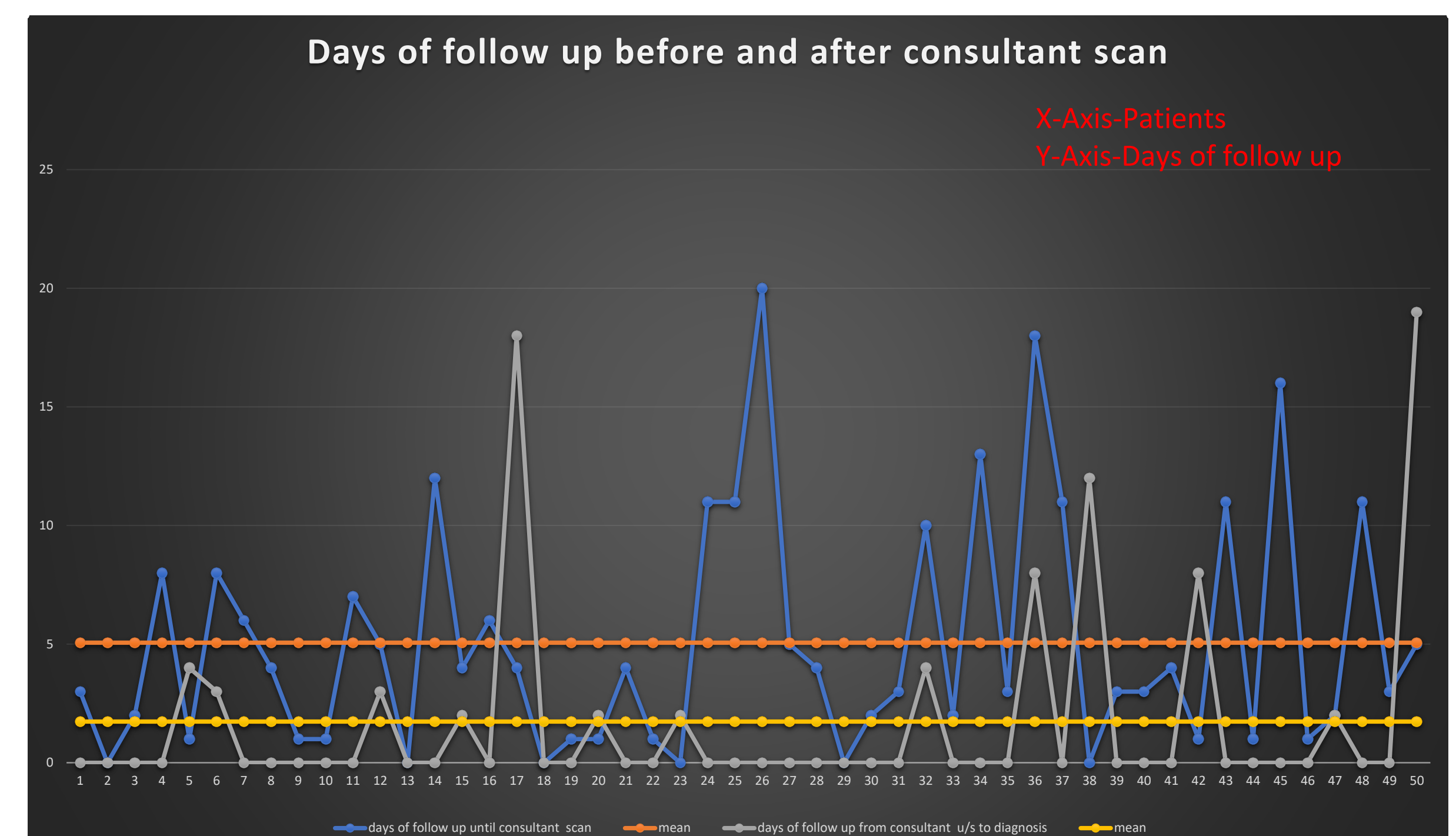
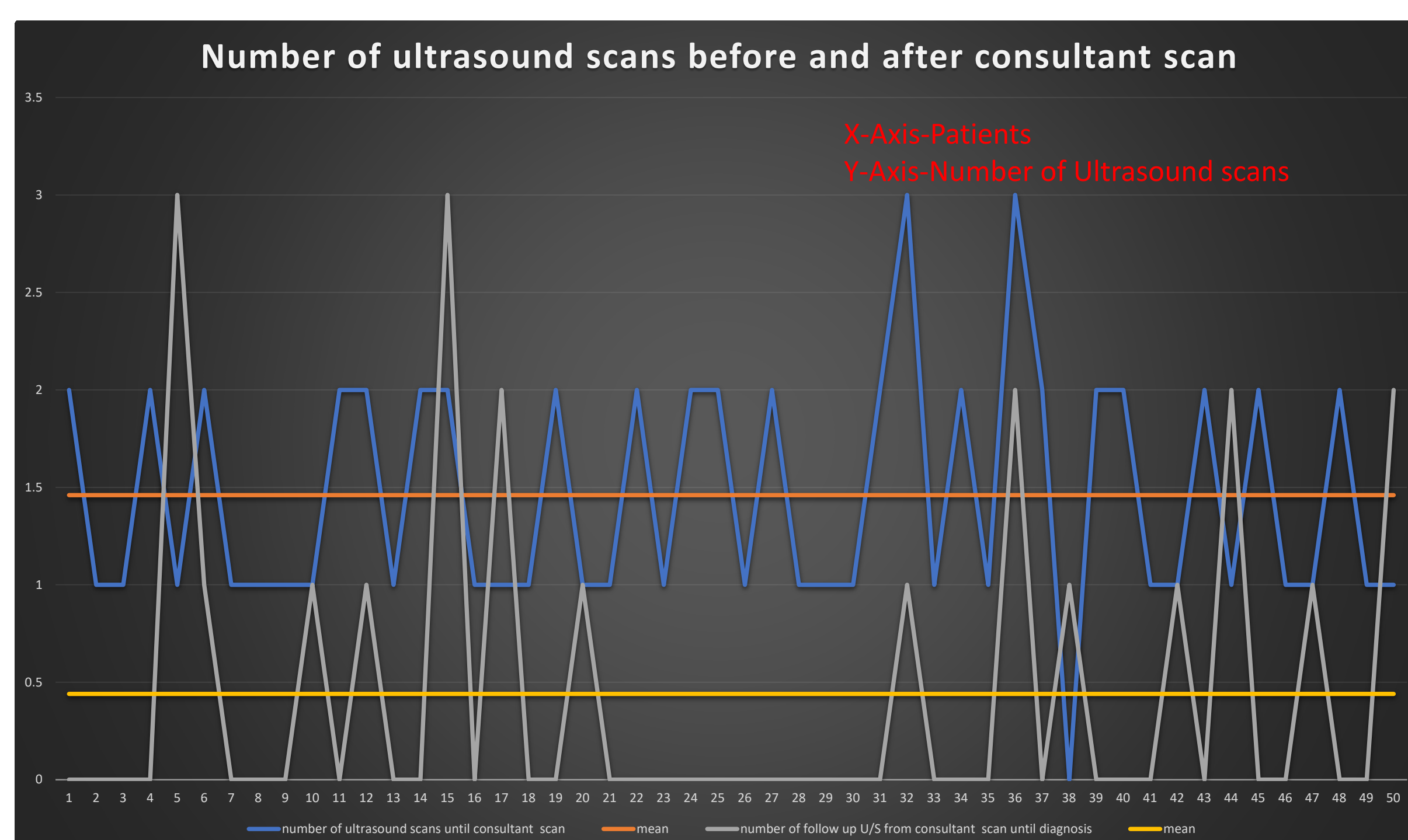
We conducted a retrospective audit on the value of a second opinion U/S performed by the early pregnancy lead consultant for patients with PUL(Pregnancy of Unknown Location) that were either persistent or had high β -HCG levels at initial presentation. The setting of the audit was a busy nurse run early pregnancy unit (EPU) with U/S input provided by sonographers .

Methods

We reviewed the medical records of 50 patients with a PUL that had imaging input by the EPU lead consultant from May 2017 to July 2018.

The audit standards were:

- 1) demonstration of reduction in the duration of follow up and β -HCG tests until the location of the pregnancy was established
- 2) High diagnostic accuracy (> 90%) for diagnosis of ectopic pregnancy.



Outcome

The final outcome of the pregnancies in this cohort of patients was: ectopic pregnancy 54%, live intrauterine pregnancy 14%, failing PUL 8% and miscarriage 24%. Prior to the second opinion scan, the mean days of follow up were 5.06 and the mean number of serum HCG measurements were 2.54. After the second opinion scan, the mean days of follow up until diagnosis were 1.74 days although 74% had diagnosis on the same day. The mean numbers of β -HCG measurements required after second opinions scan till diagnosis were 0.54. All the ectopic pregnancies in this cohort of patients were identified at the time of the early pregnancy consultant review and U/S scan. (Diagnostic accuracy 100%)

Conclusion

Specialist imaging input can improve the performance of a nurse run early pregnancy unit and reduce the duration of follow up. This can result in better utilisation of resources and has potential for cost efficiency.