All children diagnosed with a rheumatologic condition deserve the improved quality of life that results from efficient access to a pediatric rheumatologist. Rapid treatment plans impact patients' lives on many levels, including short-term physical function, family stress level, and long-term health outcomes.

- We will increase from 35% to 85% our rate of appointments scheduled within one month for referred pediatric patients who require continuous rheumatologic care by June 1, 2018.

Continuous Rheumatologic Care is defined as a pediatric patient (≤18 yrs of age) who is referred from another specialist and/or requires the expertise of a pediatric rheumatologist for care of a perceived rheumatic/autoimmune condition and has symptoms to include any one of the following criteria: ANA titer ≥1:320, specific joint swelling, specific joint pain, persistent fever, or rash.

Unfortunately, children who are suffering but not yet connected with a pediatric rheumatologist often waste precious time, money, and resources trying to find solutions via the wrong treatment. Rheumatological illnesses are complex, and often somewhat mysterious. Families may make multiple trips to the emergency room for pain, rendering costly, dangerous, and ineffective prescriptions. Considering the average cost of a pediatric ED visit ranges from $500-600, x-rays $250-500, and MRIs $500-1,300, it is clear that missteps can rapidly and unnecessarily escalate the cost of care. Even repeated, inconclusive visits to the primary care provider can affect the affordability of care at roughly $150 per visit. Treatment delays can result in expensive hospitalization and complications; using lupus as an example, the average inpatient admission due to poor medication management can cost $5,200 and an 8.7 day hospital stay. Inappropriate referrals to rheumatology likewise waste money, with new outpatient pediatric rheumatology visits costing $600. Aside from the most important health and quality of life outcomes, even rough estimates illustrate the financial value in improving the efficiency and accuracy of referrals.

Our run chart tells us we have sustained our performance above goal for the last 4 months. We are pursuing multiple ways to share the benefits of this work. Meanwhile, presentations to the Levine Children’s Specialty Center medical director and office manager have resulted in planning for system-wide referral process improvements. We are pursuing multiple ways to share the benefits of this work. Meanwhile, presentations to the Levine Children’s Specialty Center medical director and office manager have resulted in planning for system-wide referral process improvements.