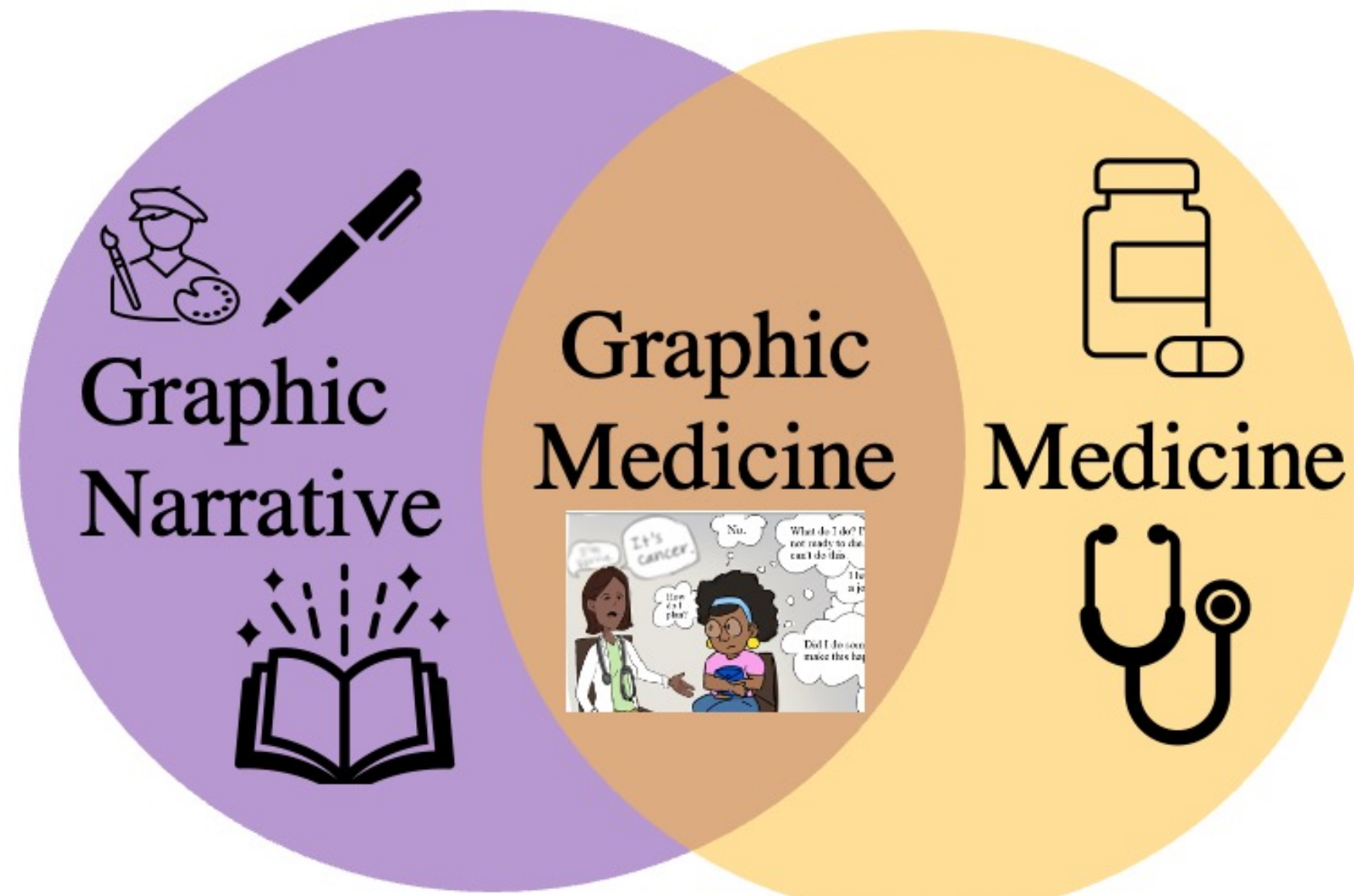


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Background

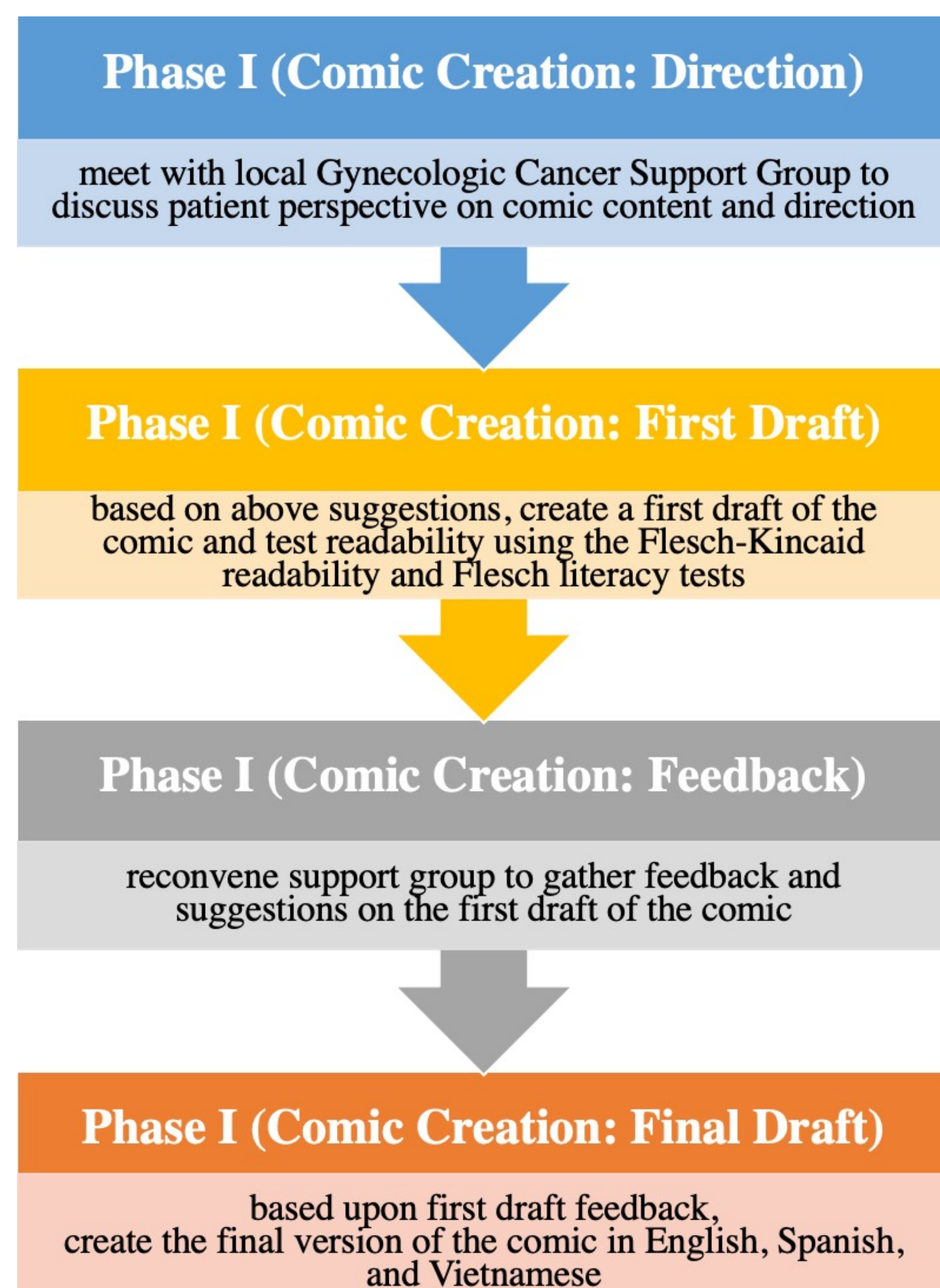
- Graphic medicine is a newly emerging field that combines the disciplines of medicine and graphic narratives



- Visual mediums, such as comics, may hold more appeal for visual learners and help **simplify and explain complex topics**
- Information told through graphic medicine may be more **accessible** for patient audiences with a wide range of literacy levels
 - Louisiana has an average reading level of 4th grade, significantly below that of the national average

Study Objectives & Method

- This project aims to **investigate the potential usefulness of comics as a therapeutic and teaching tool for patients in gynecologic oncology clinics**
- The ultimate objective is to create a narrative about a patient with a newly diagnosed cancer; Phase I involved comic creation



Results: First Draft Feedback

Overall the comic received very positive feedback from the Gynecologic Cancer Support Group, which consisted of gynecologic oncology patients and survivors. The group was led by a physician, a therapist, and two nurses.

Strengths (Examples of Patient Comments)

- story and illustrations resonate with patients
- readable, helpful, and compelling narrative for any age

Areas of Improvement (Examples of Patients Comments)

- increase gender diversity of Fran's support systems
- change physician's expression to neutral when delivering diagnosis
- add local resources to resource list

Results: Readability

Readability

Flesch Reading Ease*	82.4
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level**	3.7

***Flesch Reading Ease score** measures readability based upon average length of sentences and average number of syllables per word. A score of 82.4 means "easy to read."

****Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level** assesses approximate reading grade level of a text. A score of 3.7 means third grade.

Results: Final Version of the Comic*

*also available in Spanish and Vietnamese, including a "Patient Resources" section at the end of the comic

The comic strip consists of several panels:

- Panel 1:** Fran is in her garden. Text: "This is Fran. She lives in New Orleans. She just turned 55. She loves gardening."
- Panel 2:** Fran is talking to her family. Text: "It's cancer. Fran starts small. First she tells her family and friends about the diagnosis. Her family even offers to shave their heads with her!"
- Panel 3:** Fran is at a doctor's appointment. Text: "Several people say that they keep journals to document their experiences. Fran decides to try that out."
- Panel 4:** Fran is writing in a journal. Text: "Writing down her thoughts at the end of the day gives her time to self-reflect. She also decides to download a meditation app on her phone. She starts by listening at night in her bed. Then she listens whenever she feels anxious or out of control."
- Panel 5:** Fran is at a support group. Text: "After a few weeks, Fran decides to join a local cancer support group. At first, she is nervous to go. But she takes the leap and discovers that the other members are friendly, and sharing her story helps. Her new friends talk about what has helped them cope with their diagnosis and give tips on getting through therapy."
- Panel 6:** Fran is in bed. Text: "Fran keeps going to her doctor's appointments. It helps that she brings a family member or friend to every appointment. When these bad days come, Fran learns to reach out to her support network for help. She learns that the bad days are temporary. She takes things one day at a time and reminds herself to be patient and kind with herself, even (especially) on the days when she just wants to stay in bed. The journey is still scary, but Fran has found coping mechanisms that work for her. Fran knows she is strong."
- Panel 7:** Fran is holding a chart. Text: "Fran also starts to keep a chart of all her medications, including name and dosage. The chart helps her feel more in control. Fran has good days! She has bad days too, just like her doctor warned her."
- Panel 8:** Fran is meditating. Text: "She is loved. She is journal. She is calling friends and family. She is meditate. She is RESILIENT."

Resources Section:

- DO:**
 - Yoga
 - Online support groups
 - Hobbies
 - Book club
 - Church
 - Humor
 - Mindset shift
 - Self compassion
 - Maintain routine
 - Accept help
 - Listen to other survivors
 - Journal
 - Talk to a counselor
- DO NOT:**
 - Google statistics
 - Listen to second-hand stories
 - Stress needlessly
 - Reject help

Apps: Insight Timer, Smiling Mind, UCLA Mindful, Aura, Calm, Headspace

Resources: The "Patient Resources" section directs readers to a range of resources, including the National Cancer Institute (NCI), the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN), Medline Plus, the American Cancer Society (ACS), and ClinicalTrials.gov

Conclusion and Future Direction

Conclusion

- The comic received overall very **positive feedback** from the focus group, whose input was invaluable in determining the direction and development of the comic
- Using well-established readability measures, **we determined that the comic is readable for a patient audience with a wide range of literacy levels**

Future Direction

- Phase II of the project will involve **distributing the comic in various oncology clinics**
- Patients will then be surveyed** on the efficacy of this educational material through validated measurements such as the STAI (State-Trait Anxiety Inventory) Scale as well as Likert scales for knowledge levels and comic relatability, likability, and helpfulness