

Aligning excellence in symptom assessment and management in oncology nursing: insights from a learning needs analysis.

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Introduction

Symptom assessment and management is the cornerstone of quality care in oncology nursing. Contemporary resources and opportunities to advance skills through education and training are necessary.

Objectives

This learning needs analysis (LNA) of paediatric symptom assessment and management explored the current practices and perceptions of nurses, education curriculum content, and recommendations in the literature.



Key Recommendations for Paediatric Oncology Symptom Assessment.

- There are identifiable "core" high priority symptoms that are common across diagnoses and treatments.
- Self-report of symptoms from the child is the gold standard, if child is able (based on developmental age, cognitive status, and severity of illness)
- Symptom assessment should always be documented and communicated to relevant members of the health care team.
- Patients and families should receive education related to symptom assessment.

Withycombe, et al. (2019)

Core Symptoms for Priority Assessment During Childhood Cancer Therapy.

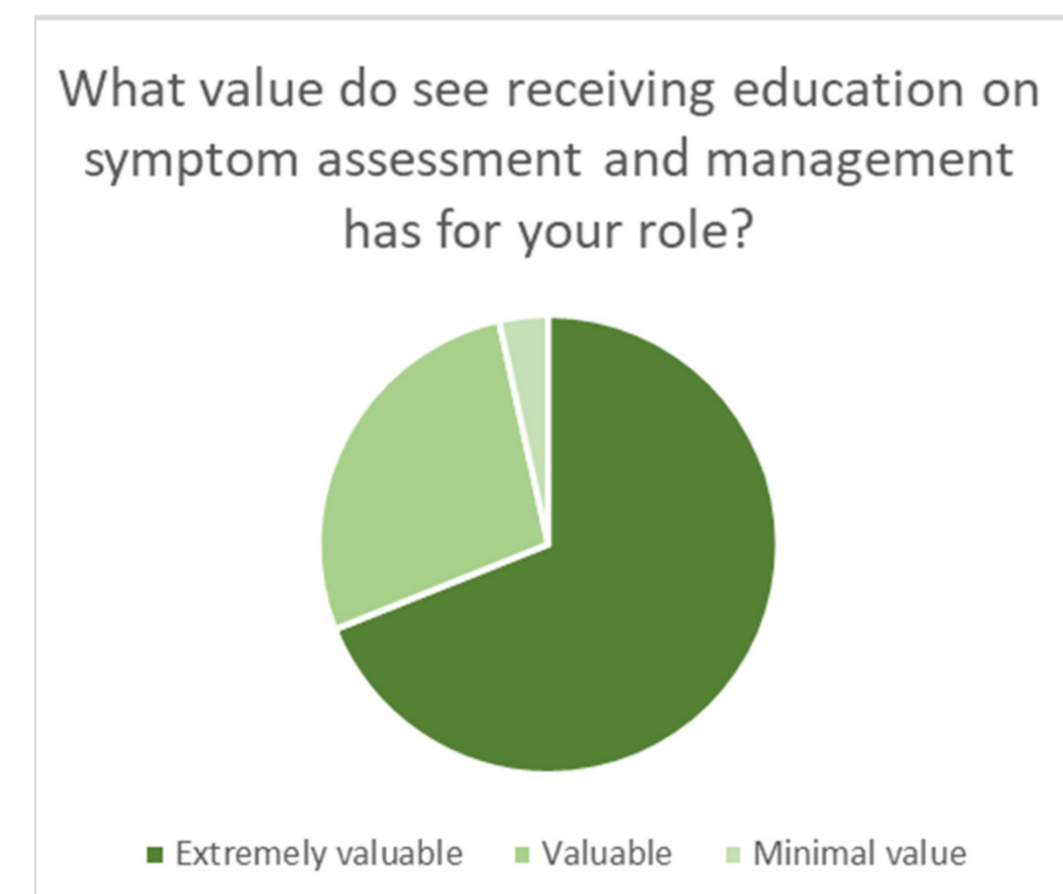
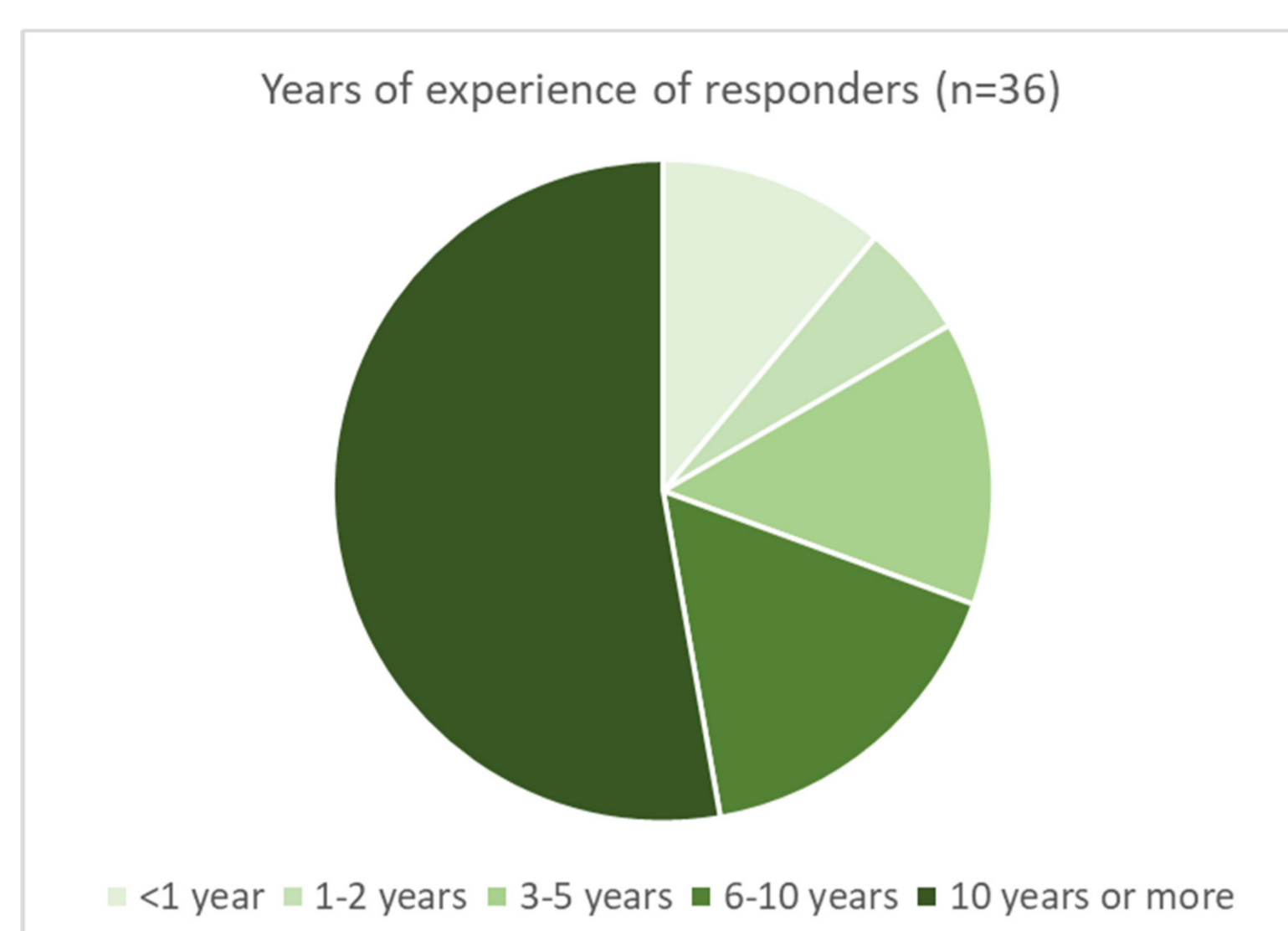
- Anxiety
- Fatigue
- Nausea and vomiting
- Pain
- Sadness/depression
- Sleep disturbance

Withycombe, et al. (2019)

Methodology

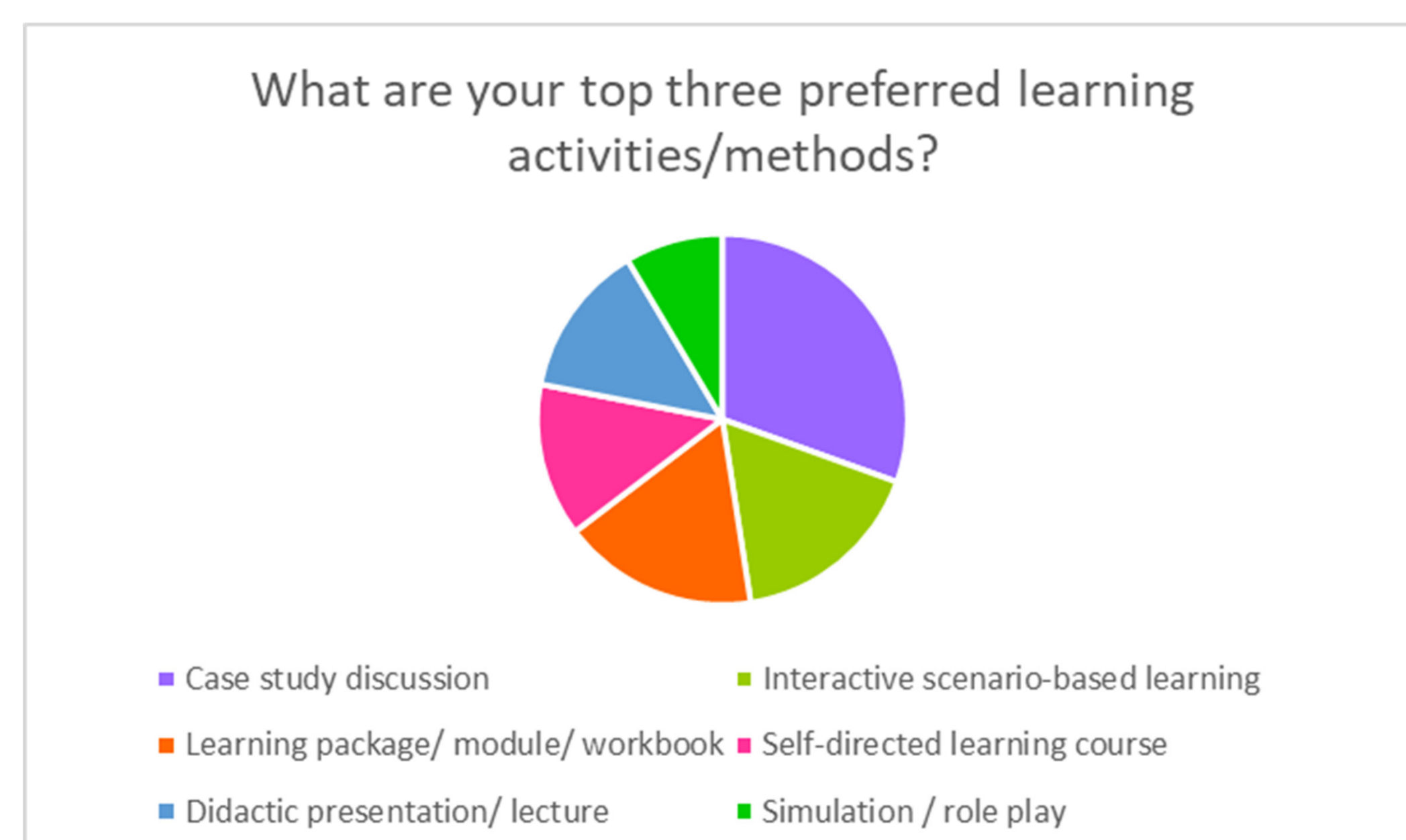
The LNA involved a literature search, gap analysis, staff survey, and focus groups. The staff survey and focus groups determined the knowledge, confidence, and attitudes of nurses towards symptom assessment and management, their learning needs, and preferred mode of education delivery.

The survey was distributed to nursing staff using convenience sampling via email and QR code. Ethics approval was obtained for the online survey and participants consented electronically.



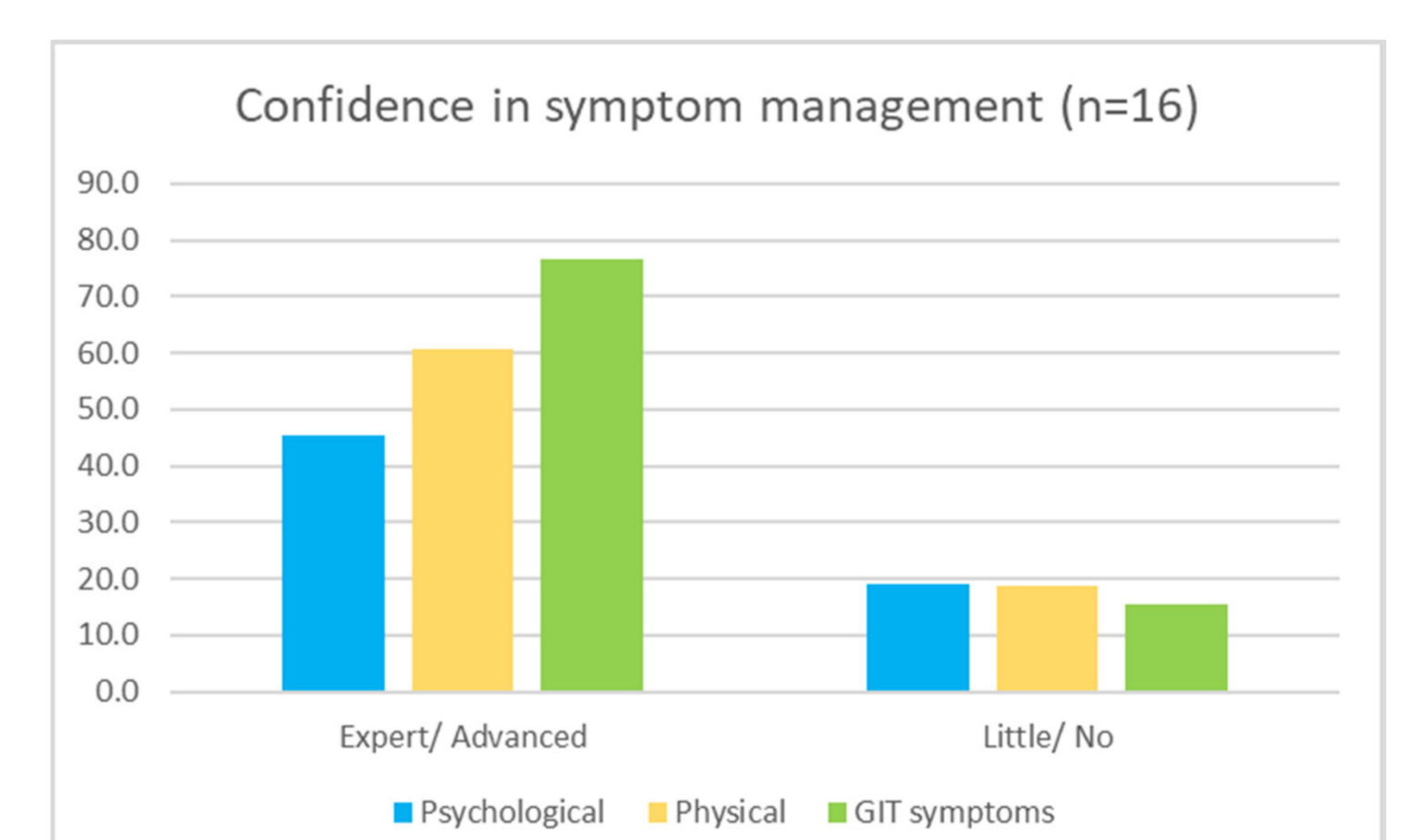
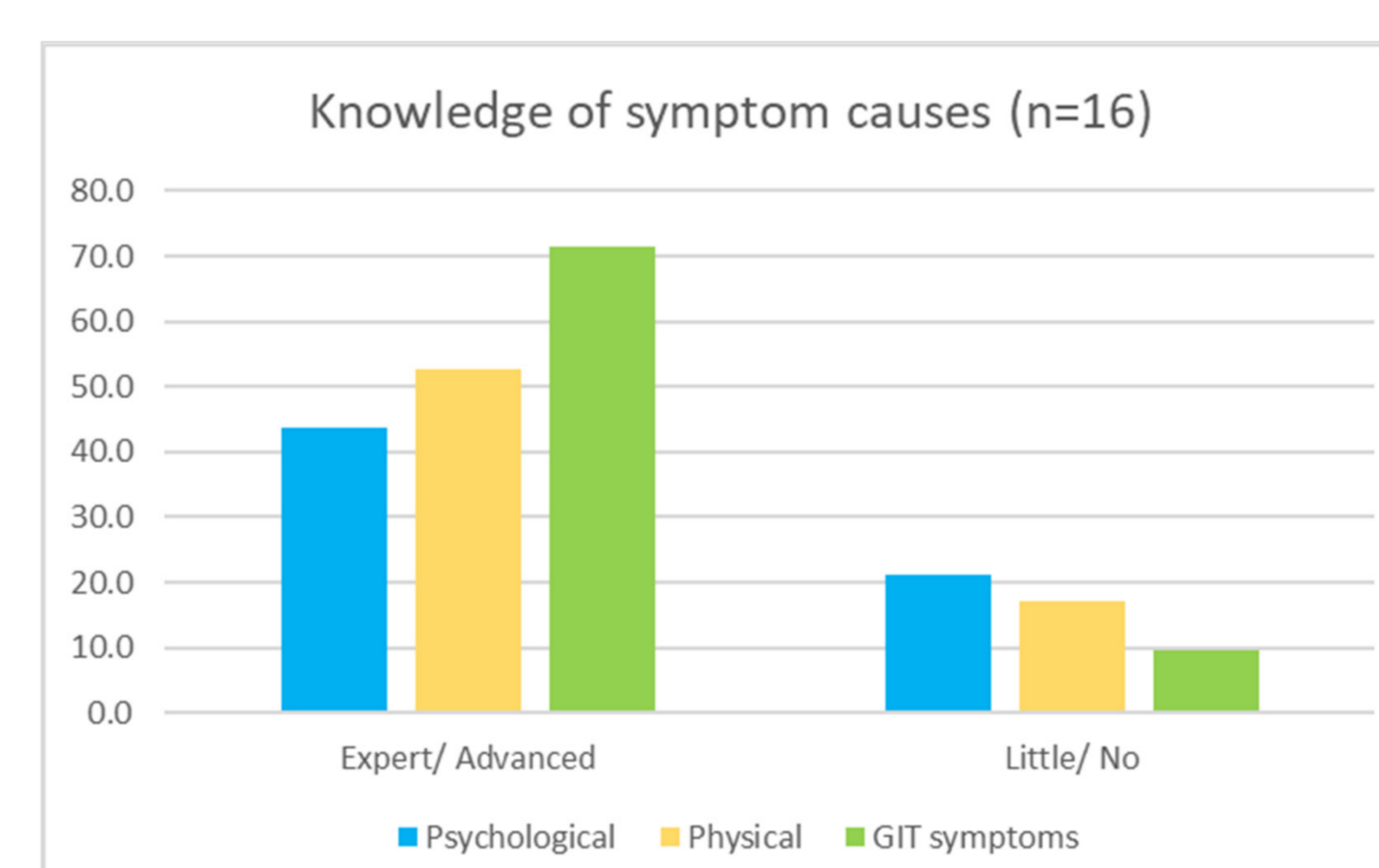
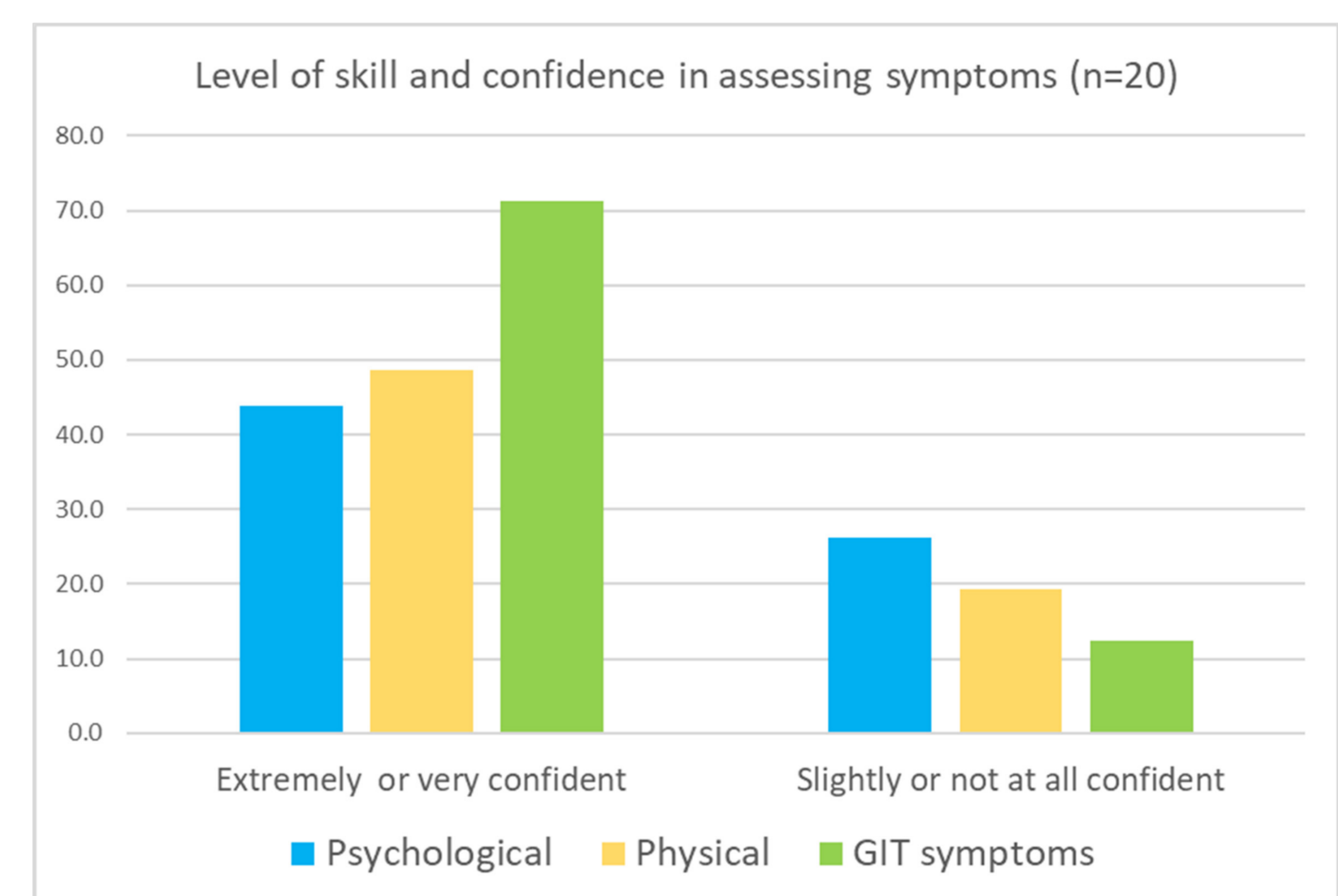
Results

Of the 36 responses, 70% of participants had more than 5 years' experience in assessing and managing symptoms in oncology. 96% of respondents thought symptom assessment/ management education was valuable to their role and preferred case study discussions, scenario-based learnings, and learning packages/workbooks. 60% of participants preferred accessing education via face-to-face workshop or in-service.



Results

54% of respondents were familiar with patient reported outcome measures (PROMS). Nurses reported greater knowledge, skills and confidence in assessing and managing physical symptoms (e.g., pain, nausea, and vomiting) when compared to psychological symptoms (e.g., sleep disturbance and fatigue). Confidence correlated with the availability of assessment tools and clinical practice guidelines. Results from the LNA will inform the development and implementation of targeted resources.



Conclusion

The LNA identified education delivery preferences and the need to further develop curricula to train oncology nurses on assessment and management strategies. The LNA highlighted the need to support staff in the assessment and management of psychological distress. Further research to explore the implementation context for education resources and PROMs to support symptom assessment and management is needed.

References:
 Withycombe, J. S., Haugen, M., Zupanec, S., Macpherson, C. F., & Landier, W. (2019). Consensus Recommendations From the Children's Oncology Group Nursing Discipline's State of the Science Symposium: Symptom Assessment During Childhood Cancer Treatment. *Journal of pediatric oncology nursing : official journal of the Association of Pediatric Oncology Nurses*, 36(4), 294–299. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1043454219854983>

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