

# An evaluation of the medication counselling service provided by stage three pharmacy students in a tertiary centre teaching hospital in the North East of England.

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## INTRODUCTION

The General Pharmaceutical Council outlined in 2017 nine new standards for pharmacy professionals.(1) As a result, the way placements are delivered for pharmacy undergraduates has been reworked to ensure that training is fit for purpose. Seventy stage three pharmacy students participated in these new ward-based placements within a tertiary teaching hospital in the North East of England between October 2020 and January 2021. **The aim of the study was to conduct a service evaluation of the student interactions with the patients.**

## THE INTERVENTION

In small groups (n=2-3) students reported to a ward and conducted drug histories on a number of patients. Where the students identified patients using inhalers or taking direct oral anticoagulants (DOACs) or simple analgesia, they were able to provide simple medication counselling. These medications are associated with high-risk of harm when used incorrectly.(2) Students were trained to provide this counselling before the placement sessions.

## METHODS

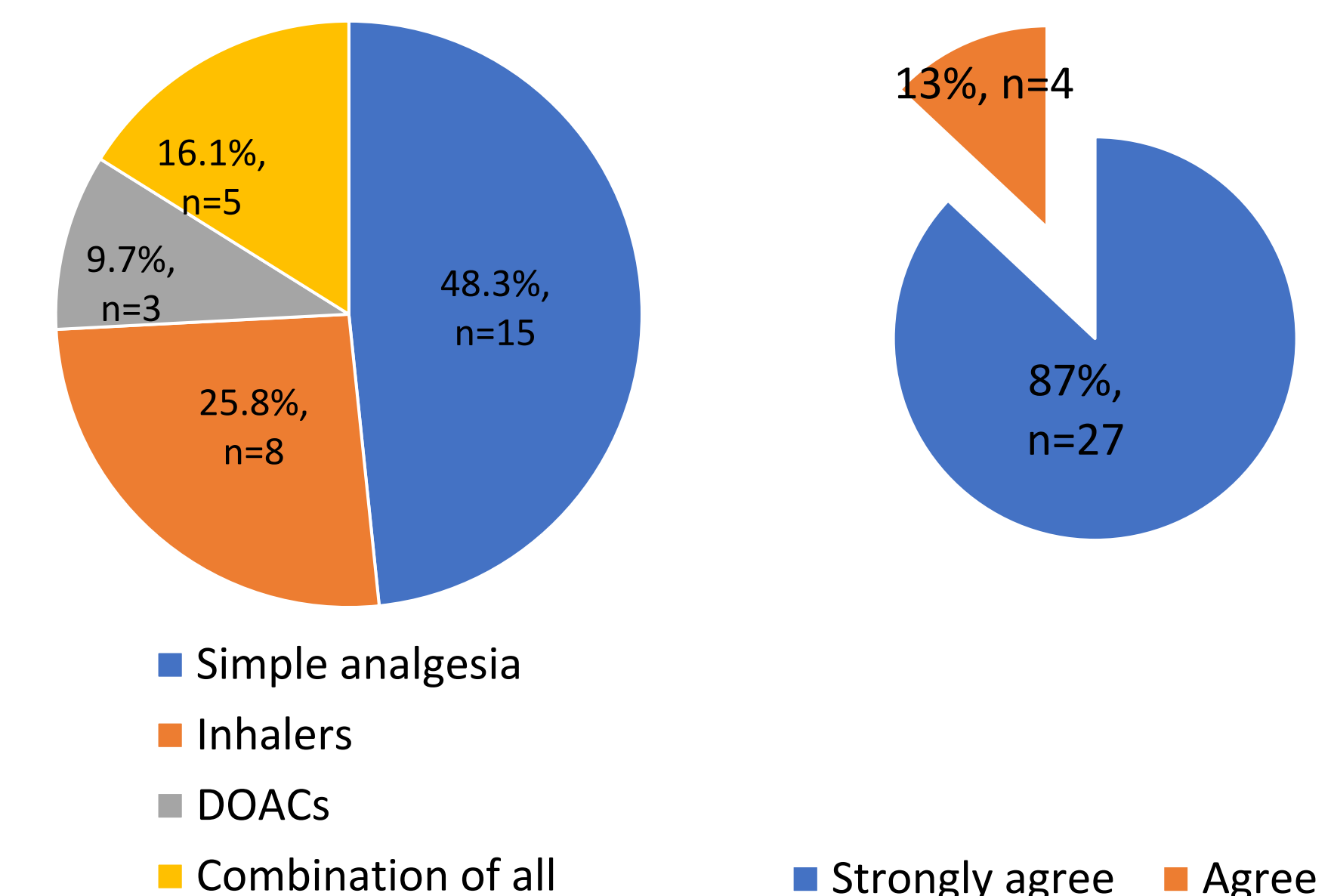
After the patient was counselled, they were invited to participate in the online survey. The pharmacy staff explained the survey and pre-populated some information on their behalf. The survey asked about the patient's medication history, their adherence and how their medicines were managed pre-admission (e.g. independently or via a compliance aid).

With regards to the medicine they were counselled on, they were asked to rate statements using a **5-point Likert scale** from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. These included being aware of side effects, adverse effects and if the counselling would change the way the medicine was taken. The survey also asked the patient if they had been counselled previously during the admission. There was also the opportunity to add free-text comments.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Thirty-one patients completed the survey. The majority received counselling on simple analgesia (48.3%, n=15), some on inhalers (25.8%, n=8), some on DOACs (9.7%, n=3), or a combination of all (16.1%, n=5), shown in Figure 1. Twenty-seven of the patients (87.1%) reported 'strongly agree' to being overall satisfied with the counselling (Figure 2). In terms of being told new information, only 3 patients reported (9.7%) 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that the advice given would change the way that the medicine was taken. This suggests that patients are already informed on how to use their medicines and that the students are reinforcing this information.

When asked if they had been counselled on the medicine during the admission, only 4 patients (14.8%) selected 'yes'. This could reflect that patients are more routinely counselled on their medications upon discharge rather than during an inpatient stay. Free-text comments reported that patients enjoyed the company of the students, particularly during a time of restricted visiting due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



## CONCLUSION

The service provided shows no harm to the patients in terms of refreshment of pre-existing knowledge of their medicines with the students contributing few new ideas or pieces of information. In some cases, the patients did benefit from the service as they reported a greater understanding of their medicines after the student interaction; although this was small.

1. General Pharmaceutical Council. Standards for pharmacy professionals. 2017.

2. Wood S. Safer prescribing and monitoring of high-risk medicines. Prescriber. 2020 Apr 1;31(4):10-5.