



# Targeted Training to Improve Knowledge and Comfort Levels in Addressing Sexuality with Cancer Survivors

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## INTRODUCTION

Human sexuality plays a critical role in overall well-being, particularly for cancer patients whose sexual health may be compromised by both the disease and its treatments. Despite the high prevalence of sexual dysfunction among cancer survivors, healthcare professionals, including occupational therapists (OTs), often feel unprepared to address sexuality-related concerns. This study aimed to enhance OTs' competence and comfort in discussing sexual health with cancer patients through a year-long educational program.

## OBJECTIVES

- 1 Improve staff knowledge and comfort levels in addressing sexuality
- 2 Integrate sexuality into standard OT practice
- 3 Develop department resources
- 4 Establish OT as designated expert on multidisciplinary team

## PARTICIPANTS

Sex	n (%)
Female	12 (80%)
Male	3 (20%)
Other/Decline to answer	0 (0%)
Race/Ethnicity	n (%)
White (non-Hispanic)	2 (13%)
Black or African American	1 (1%)
Asian	8 (53%)
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	2 (13%)
Other/Multiracial	0 (0%)
Years of Clinical Experience	n (%)
0-5 years	7 (47%)
5-10 years	4 (27%)
10+ years	4 (27%)

Hispanic or Latino may be of any race and is reported as a separate category.

## BARRIERS IDENTIFIED BY PARTICIPANTS

Pre-Training		
1	Client's lack of readiness	13 (87%)
2	Lack of training	12 (80%)
3	Fear of offending the patient	11 (73%)
4	Lack of knowledge	9 (60%)
5	Client is too ill to address sexual issues	9 (60%)
6	Sexual health is not a priority	8 (53%)
7	I am embarrassed	6 (40%)
8	Client is of the opposite sex	6 (40%)

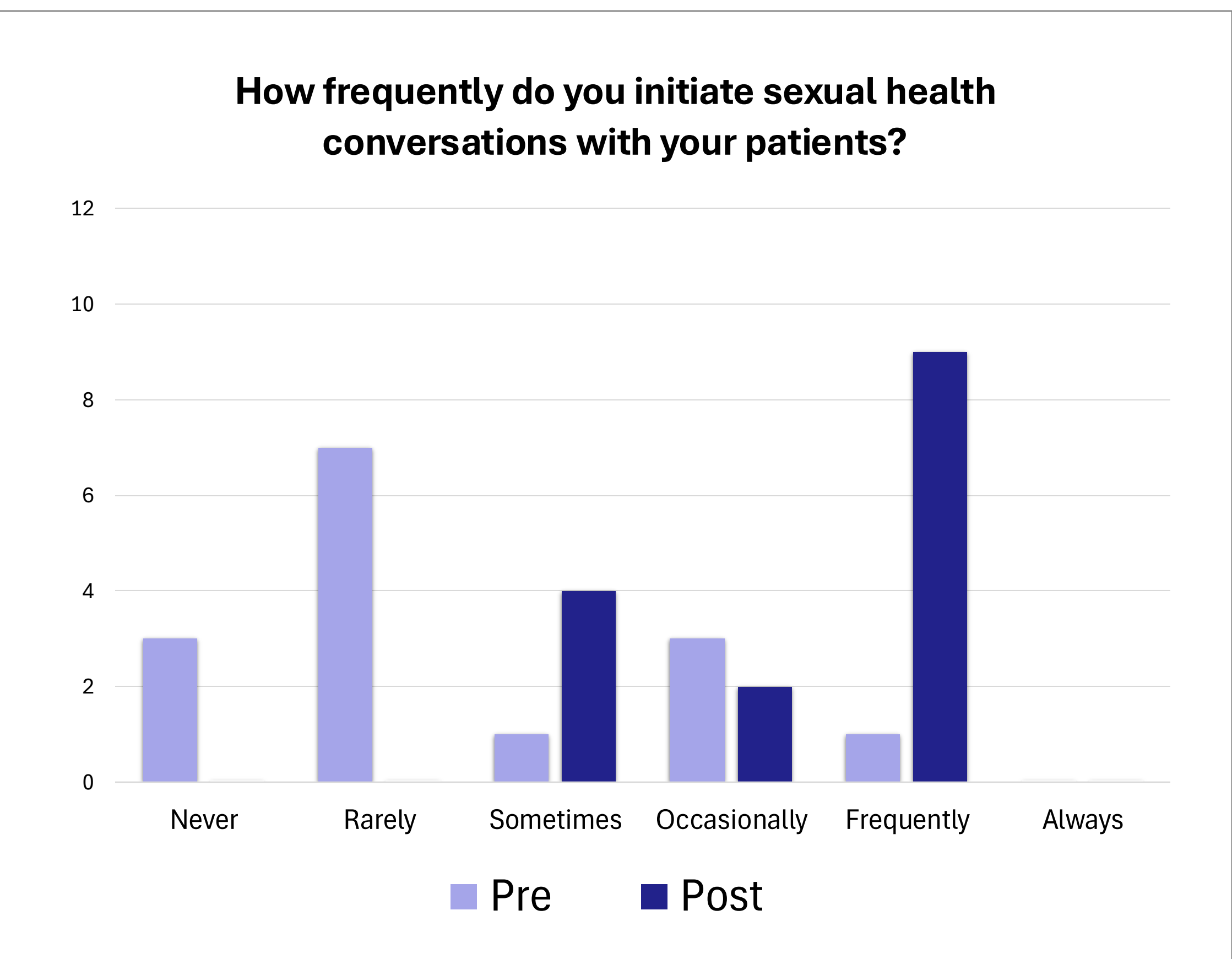
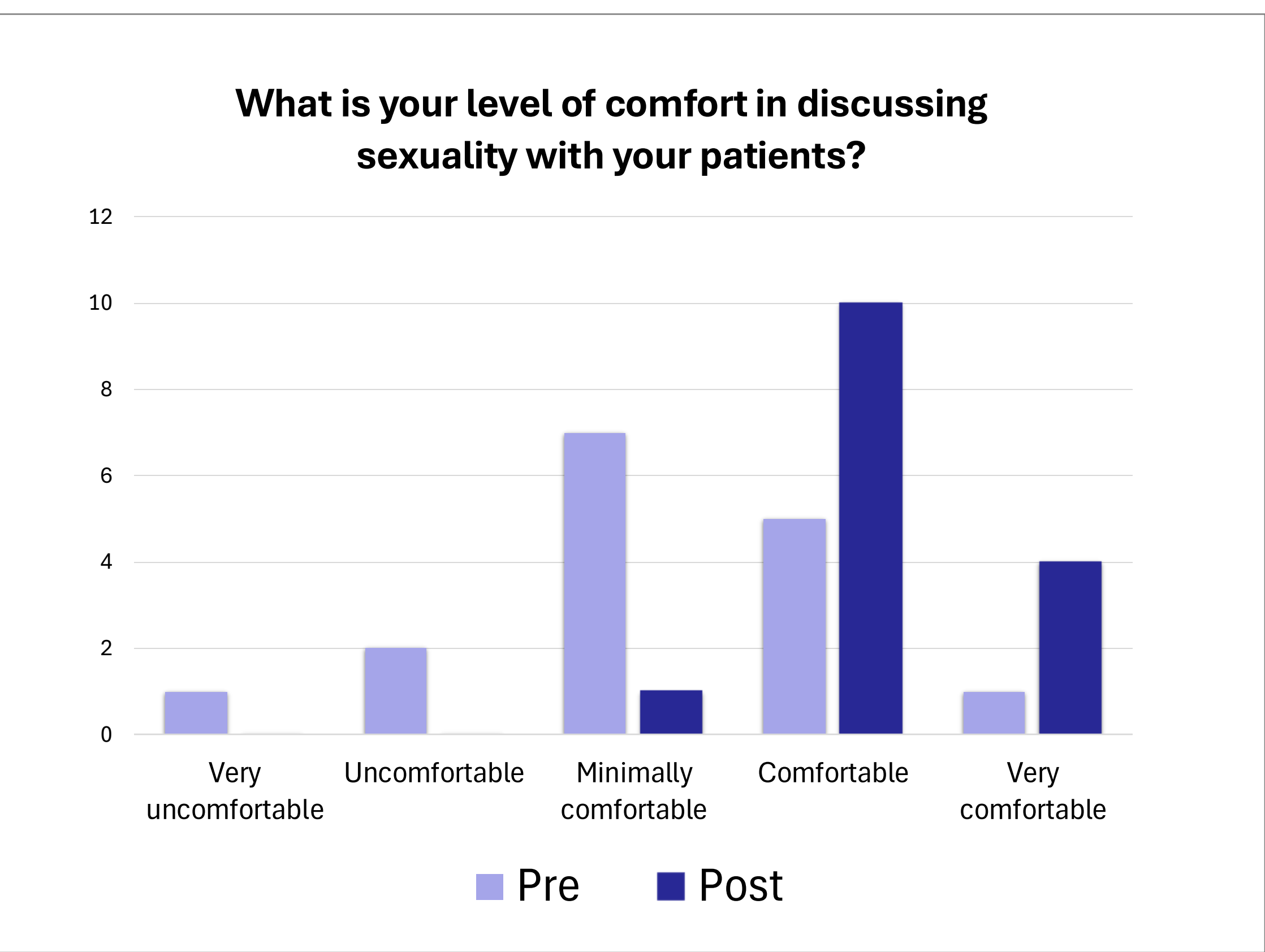
A pre-training survey was administered to all participants to assess specific training needs and identify attitudes and barriers toward addressing sexuality in their practice.

## METHODS

- 1 Pre-training needs assessment/survey
- 2 Weekly case study discussion
- 3 Monthly educational series
- 4 Role play
- 5 Scripted scenarios
- 6 Subject matter expert in-service
- 7 Identification of point person in department
- 8 Resource manual

- The topic of sexuality and body image were routinely integrated into team huddles and informal discussions to integrate topics into clinical workflow
- All participants were encouraged to integrate basic screening question into initial evaluation as standard of care
- Resource manual was developed for clinician use

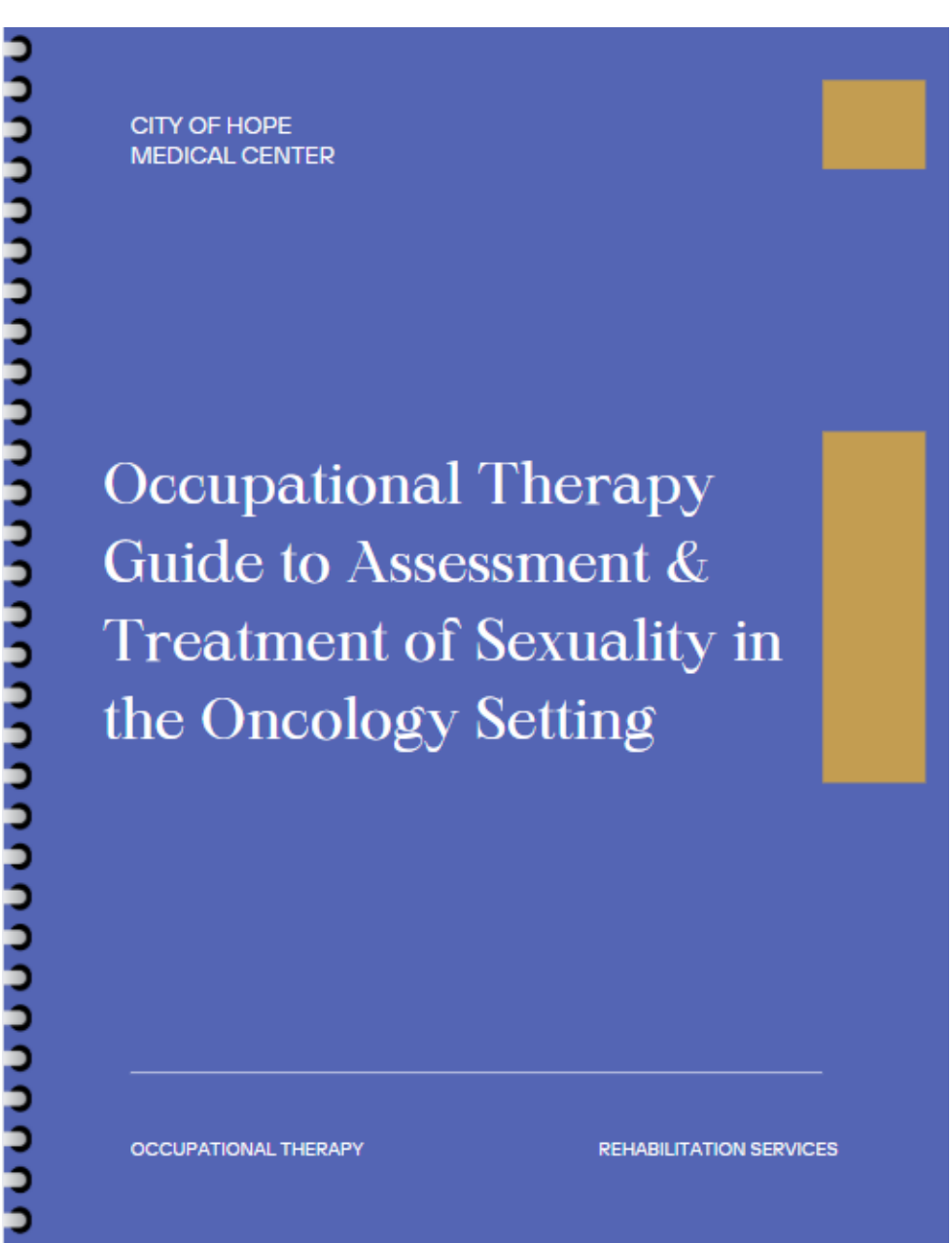
## POST-TRAINING SURVEY RESULTS



Upon conclusion of the program:

- Overall comfort level in discussing sexuality increased
- Frequency of initiating sexual health conversations increased
- Participant-identified barriers were medical acuity (53%) and fear of offending patients (47%)

## INTEGRATION INTO PRACTICE



- Screening: define and ask
- Development of clinician resource manual for screening and interventions
- Expansion of Outpatient OT Sexuality program
- Multidisciplinary collaboration with Clinical Social Work and multiple disease teams
- Monthly educational group for all City of Hope clinical sites

## CONCLUSION

- The educational program successfully improved OTs' knowledge, comfort, and practices in addressing sexuality with cancer patients.
- These findings highlight the value of targeted training in enhancing healthcare providers' ability to discuss sensitive topics and improve patient care.
- Future research should assess the long-term impact of such interventions and monitor changes in sexuality screening and treatment practices, reinforcing the essential role of OTs in holistic, client-centered cancer care.

## REFERENCES

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