

Background and Hypothesis

A growing portion of the US population identifies as transgender. The actual size may be grossly underestimated given the fear of identifying as transgender due to the social stigma. As a result, transgender patients experience high rates of discrimination with a history of poor healthcare access. It is well established, that inadequate access to healthcare can result in severe adverse health outcomes for the general population, but particular for transgender patients resulting in unsafe hormone treatments, procedures, and depression. Transgender people have unique healthcare needs inherent to transitioning. As a result, all medical specialties should be prepared to treat this population. Provider education is crucial to bridging the disparities faced by transgender patient in the healthcare system. This study aimed to assess the current knowledge and attitudes of healthcare providers regarding patients who identify as transgender to better address the areas for improvement in transgender education and to alleviate the health disparities in this community.

Methods

A brief anonymous online survey was distributed widely among varying healthcare providers evaluating their current knowledge and understanding of the unique medical needs of the transgender population. Data was collected over the course of approximately 6 to 8 months. Data was analyzed using quantitative methodologies

Results

The data was obtained from 50 health care providers with 48 (96 %) being physicians and 2 (4 %) being registered nurses. We had 19 (38 %) male participants, and 26 (52 %) female participants with 37 (74 %) between the ages of 25-45 and 13 (26 %) between the ages of 35-44 respectively. In regards to formal transgender education, 53.36 % cited adequate training, 42.2 % of participants cited poor training and 4.44% answered not having any formal education thus far. Of those that received poor formal education, none of those participants sought out learning opportunities to improve their understanding. When asked if they knew where to obtain reliable learning resources 36 (72%) said no and 14 (28%) answered yes. When asked what limitations if any, were there in providing care for transgender patients, 28 participants (62.22%) cited lack of experience, 14(31.11%) lack of knowledge, and 2 (4.44%) personal beliefs with 1 participant having none.

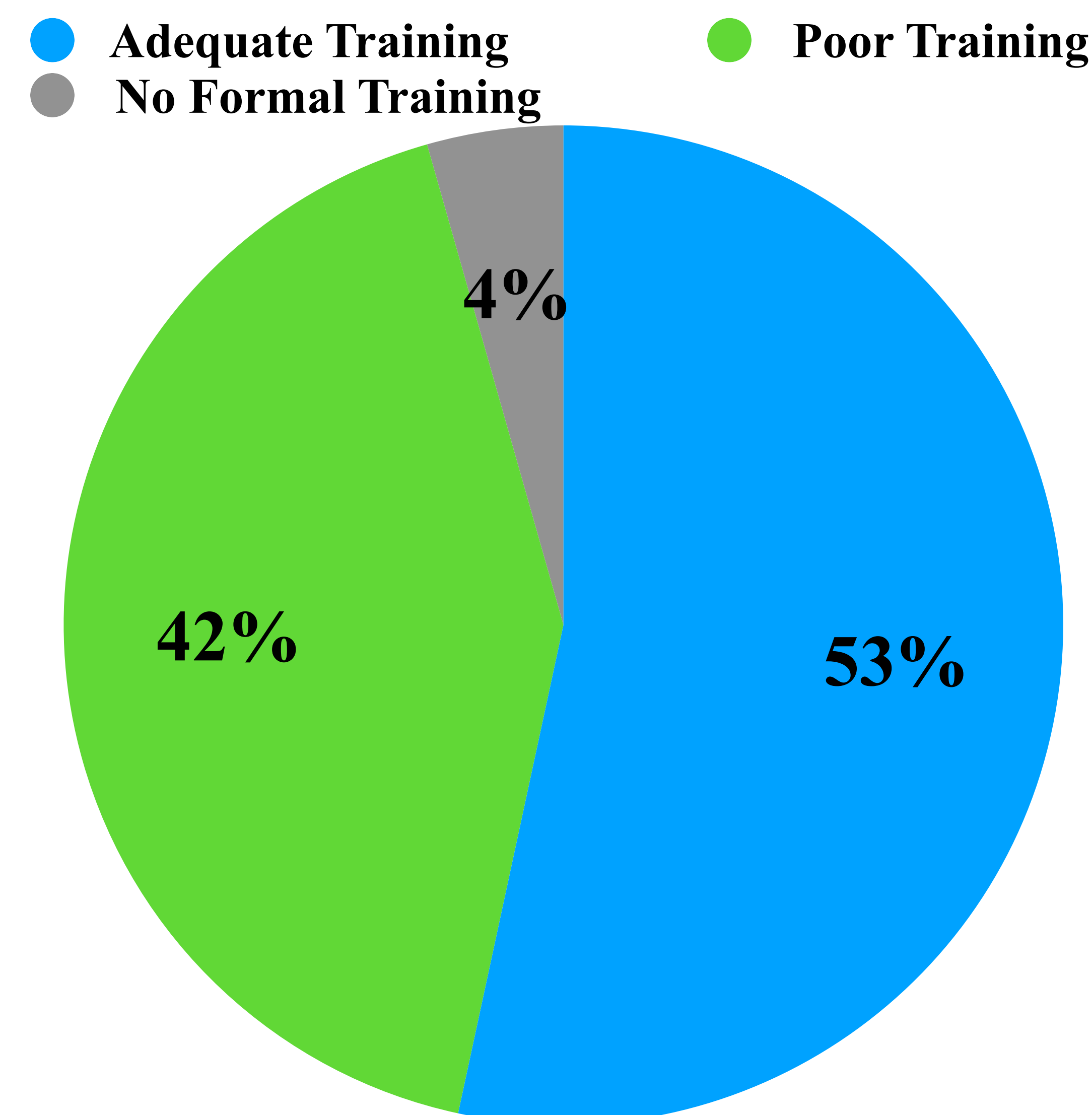


Figure 1: Level of Training

Conclusion

This study demonstrates the need for improved formal transgender education for health care providers during their formative years. As Osteopathic physicians, who address the mental, physical, and spiritual needs of patients, the care of transgender patients embodies the need for deployment of these core principles as transgender patients suffer from high levels of depression, physical hurdles with transitioning, and overall dissonance from lack of acceptance.

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