

# Healthcare Attitudes on Reporting Impaired Colleagues

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## BACKGROUND

- 1 in 10 Americans struggle with substance use disorder (SUD).
  - American healthcare professionals have rates similar to the general population.
- Historically, provider impairment was not addressed.
  - In 1973, the AMA released *The Sick Physician* – a report discussing addiction among physicians
  - Resulted in the creation of Physician Health Programs (PHPs).
- PHPs provide confidential resources to any licensed healthcare professional impaired by addiction, physical disability, or mental health.
- PHPs yield long-term maintenance of remission.
  - 78% abstinence rate at five years compared to 40-60% in the general population.
- Despite the availability and high success rates of PHPs, providers are under referred.
  - Studies on reporting behaviors have primarily focused on physician populations.
- Prior to 2015, only physicians and physician assistants were required to report impaired colleagues.
  - In 2015, Connecticut extended the mandated reporting law to 41 different licensed healthcare professionals.

**PRIMARY AIM** To assess the change in reporting rates since the 2015 law revision and characterize the knowledge, opinions, and experiences of healthcare professionals on reporting impaired colleagues.

## METHODS

### SURVEY DESIGN

- 14-item online survey:
  - Knowledge about reporting potentially impaired colleagues
  - Beliefs & opinions on reporting potentially impaired colleagues
  - Experiences with reporting potentially impaired colleagues

### PARTICIPANTS

- Licensed medical professional employed at University of Connecticut Health Center
  - Medical professionals invited based off Connecticut General Statue Section 19a-12e
  - Medical residents and other training health professionals were not invited to participate

### REPORTING RATES

- Data on reporting rates to HAVEN (Connecticut's PHP) was obtained from HAVEN.

### DATA ANALYSIS

- Regression analysis was used to evaluate HAVEN reporting rates.
- Chi-squared and Fisher's exact tests were used to analyze survey responses.

## RESULTS

N = 179 (13%)

- Females (67%), Males (33%)
- Nurse (41%), Physician (36%), Other (16%), Psychologist (5%), Physician Assistant (2%)
- <5 years in practice (8%), 5 to 29 years in practice (65%), ≥30 years in practice (27%)

### EXPERIENCE

- 30% had personal knowledge of an impaired colleague
  - Nurses > Physicians ( $P < 0.05$ )
  - ≥ 30 years > 6 to 29 years > less than 5 years ( $P < 0.05$ )
- 22% reported directly to hospital or clinic
  - ≥ 30 years > 6 to 29 years > less than 5 years ( $P < 0.001$ )
- 6% reported to PHP
  - Males > Females ( $P < 0.01$ )
  - Physicians > Nurses ( $P < 0.05$ )

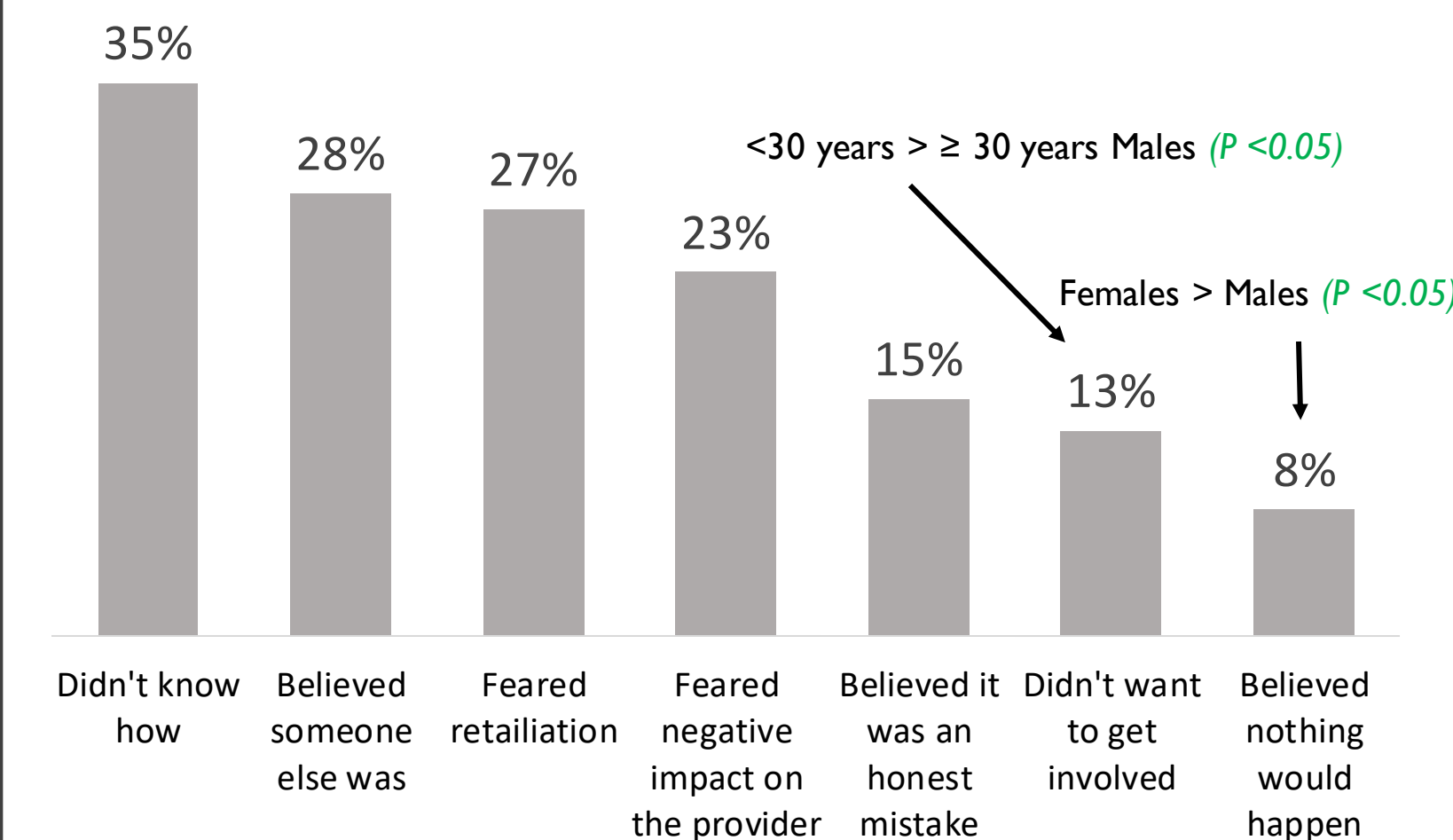
### KNOWLEDGE

- 83% completely or somewhat agree that they are aware of laws on reporting
  - Physicians > Nurses ( $P < 0.05$ )
- 58% completely or somewhat agree that they are familiar with PHPs
  - Males > Females ( $P < 0.01$ )
  - Physicians > Nurses ( $P < 0.01$ )
  - ≥ 30 years > less than 5 years ( $P < 0.05$ )

### OPINIONS

- 95% completely or somewhat agree that all instances of potentially impaired colleagues should be reported

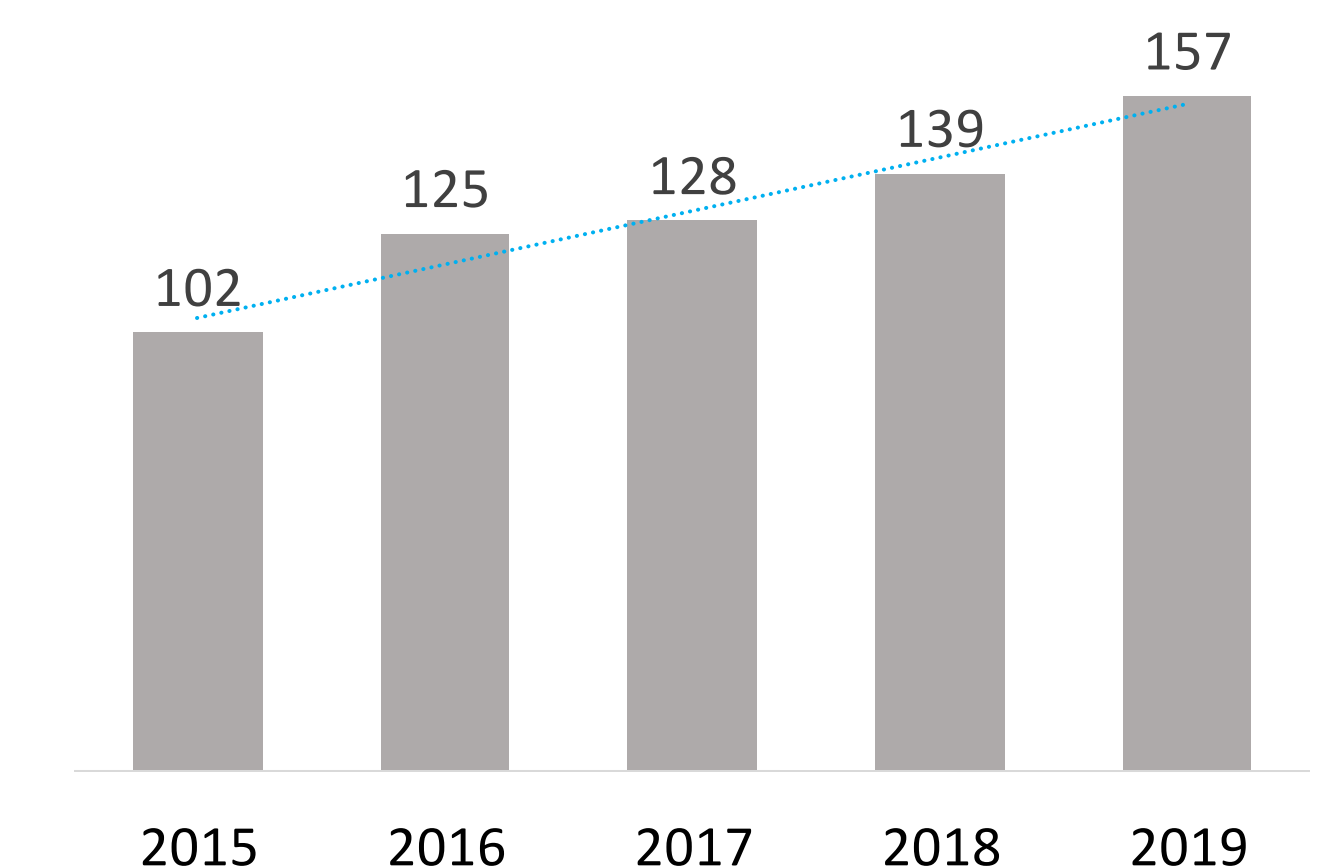
Reason(s) for Not Reporting



### RATES OF REPORTING

- HAVEN had a 54% increase in referrals (2015-2019)
- On average, there was a 12.4 increase per year

Referrals to HAVEN



## CONCLUSIONS

- There are knowledge disparities among healthcare professionals – suggests a need for more standardized education.
- Future research should consider professionals still in training and examine how reporting rates have changes in other states, where there was not a law change.

## REFERENCES

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