

Development and Evaluation of a Collaborative Tele-mentoring Model: ECHO Ontario Complex Patient Management

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Background

Primary care providers are first-line responders for complex patients. In rural and underserved areas, where access to specialists is limited, complex mental and physical health concerns are often managed by providers feeling under-resourced and isolated.

Project Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes (ECHO) is a virtual, interactive education and capacity building program that connects providers with a specialist team as well as providers practicing in similar settings to discuss complex real-world patients, share knowledge, and learn best practices in the management of complex chronic illness.



Figure 1: Project ECHO: A Revolution in Medical Education and Care Delivery. From University of New Mexico

ECHO Ontario Complex Patient Management (ECHO-CPM) leverages the ECHO model to support healthcare providers in assessing and managing mental health conditions that are complicated by physical health concerns. Since launching this program in 2019, ECHO-CPM has held 3 cycles and reached over 100 unique healthcare providers.

Objective

Evaluate the ECHO Ontario CPM program as an education tool to assist healthcare providers in the treatment of patients who are experiencing functional impairment due to co-occurring mental and physical health concerns

Methods

ECHO-CPM Cycle 3 consists of a 12 week cycle, with hour long sessions held on a weekly basis. Each session begins with a didactic presentation focusing on a specific area of complex mental and physical healthcare, followed by an anonymized patient case discussion presented by a spoke participant.

To Assess Satisfaction: After each ECHO session, participants completed online satisfaction surveys commenting on professional isolation, enhanced knowledge, learning needs, and overall satisfaction using a 5-point Likert Scale.

To Assess Competence and Self-Efficacy: Pre- and post- program, participants rated their perceived confidence in their ability to perform tasks related to the ECHO-CPM curriculum topics using a scale from 0 to 100.

Qualitative data was collected in the post-program survey using open-ended questions. Descriptive statistics were performed using Microsoft Excel.

Key Finding:

Evaluation of ECHO Ontario Complex Patient Management suggests participants are highly satisfied and engaged with this educational program.

“Participating in this ECHO program has improved my confidence in caring for complex multi-morbid patients. Often, I would be second guessing myself when the patient wanted further clarification or a formal diagnosis. Being part of this group made me realize additional depths of certain conditions and important red flags to consider, as well as when to pivot or add to the care the supportive and motivational role a provider should have when caring for complex patients [...]”

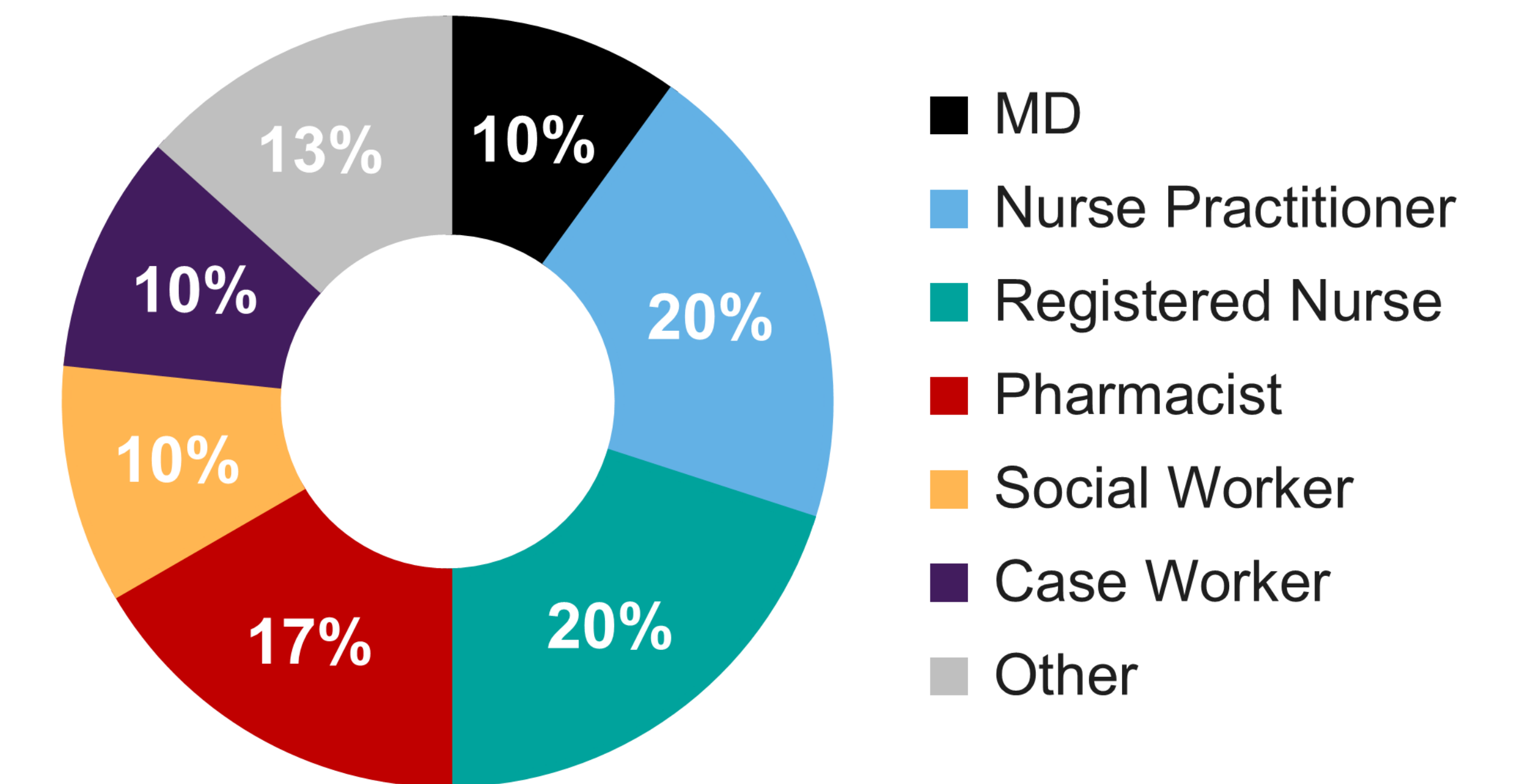
–ECHO CPM Participant

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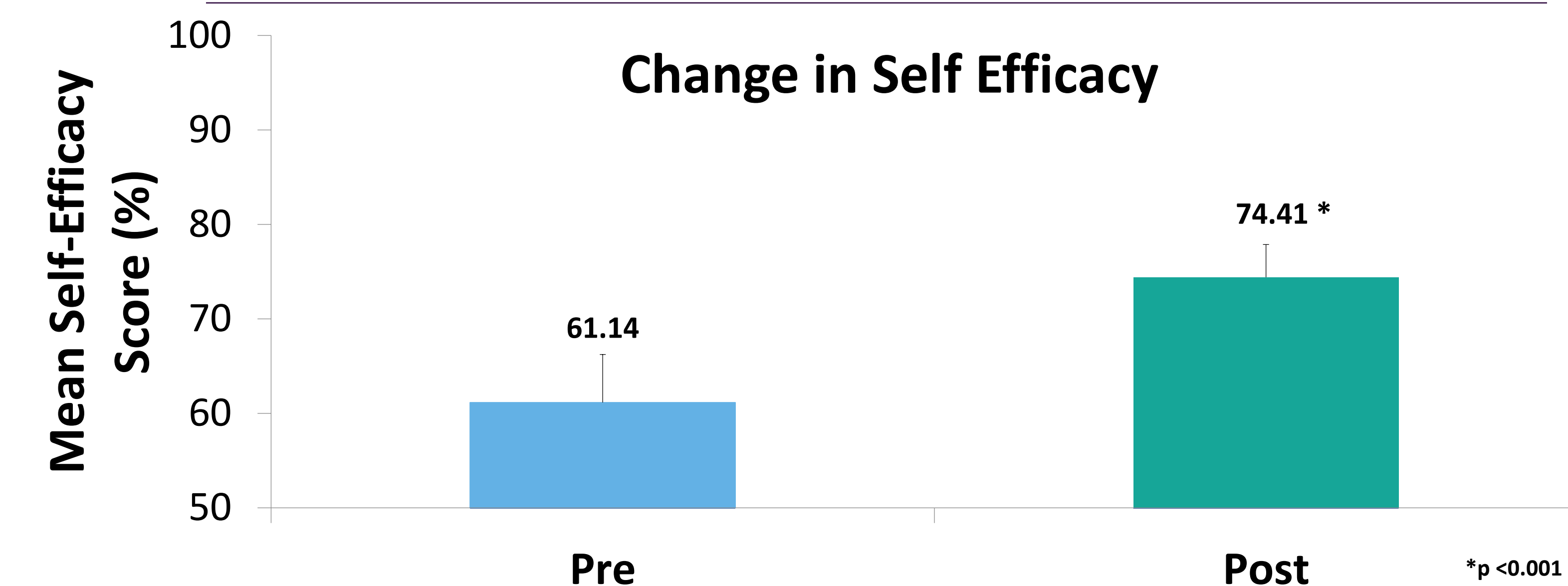
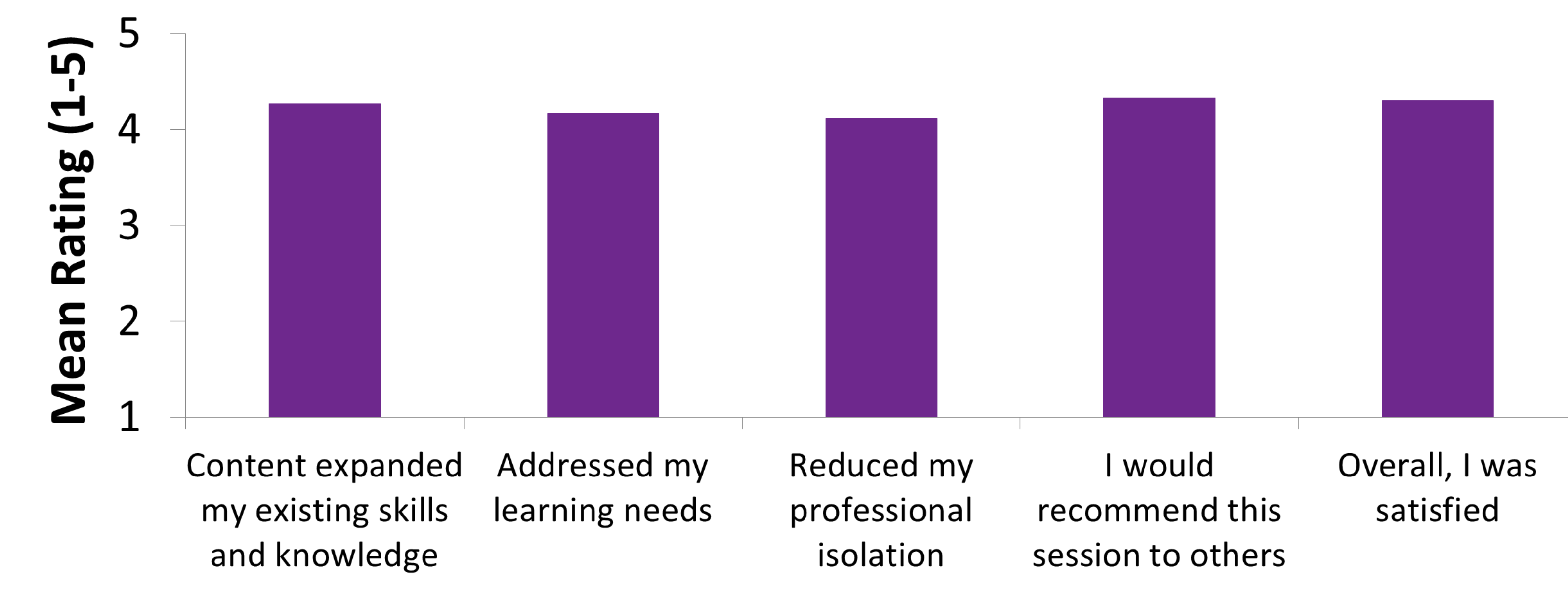
Results

Participant Professional Breakdown



- » 30 participants from 28 organizations
- » Average session attendance was 15
- » 97% retention rate

Mean Weekly Session Satisfaction Ratings



Discussion/Impact

- » Findings from ECHO-CPM suggest high participant satisfaction and engagement
- » Feedback gathered from participants' show ECHO-CPM to be a beneficial intervention in supporting providers to manage patients with complex co-occurring mental and physical health concerns across Ontario.