

Integration of Palliative Care Services in Home Healthcare:

Findings from a Pilot Study Assessing Knowledge, Attitudes, and Confidence among U.S. Clinicians, Patients and Caregivers

Ashley Chastain DrPH, MPH¹, Margaret McDonald MSW², Lori King MPH², Komal Murali PhD, RN, ACNP-BC³, Khadra Dualeh MPH¹, Charity Ogunlusi MD, MPH¹, Jung Kang RN, AGACNP-BC, AGCNS-BC¹, Suning Zhao MPH¹, Jingjing Shang PhD, RN, FAAN, OCN¹



¹Columbia University School of Nursing, New York, NY, USA
²VNSHealth, New York, NY, USA
³NYU Rory Meyers College of Nursing, New York, NY, USA

BACKGROUND

- In the U.S., home health care (HHC) agencies serve older, seriously ill patients who could benefit from palliative care (PC) services.¹
- Only 7% of home-based PC programs in the U.S. are operated by HHC agencies.²
- Successful PC integration into HHC practice depends upon workforce readiness to provide services.
- Patient and caregiver receptivity are also key factors in ensuring the effectiveness of PC in the HHC setting.

OBJECTIVE

To develop and test two questionnaires assessing U.S. HHC clinician readiness for and patient/caregiver receptiveness to PC measured by knowledge, attitudes, and confidence

METHODS

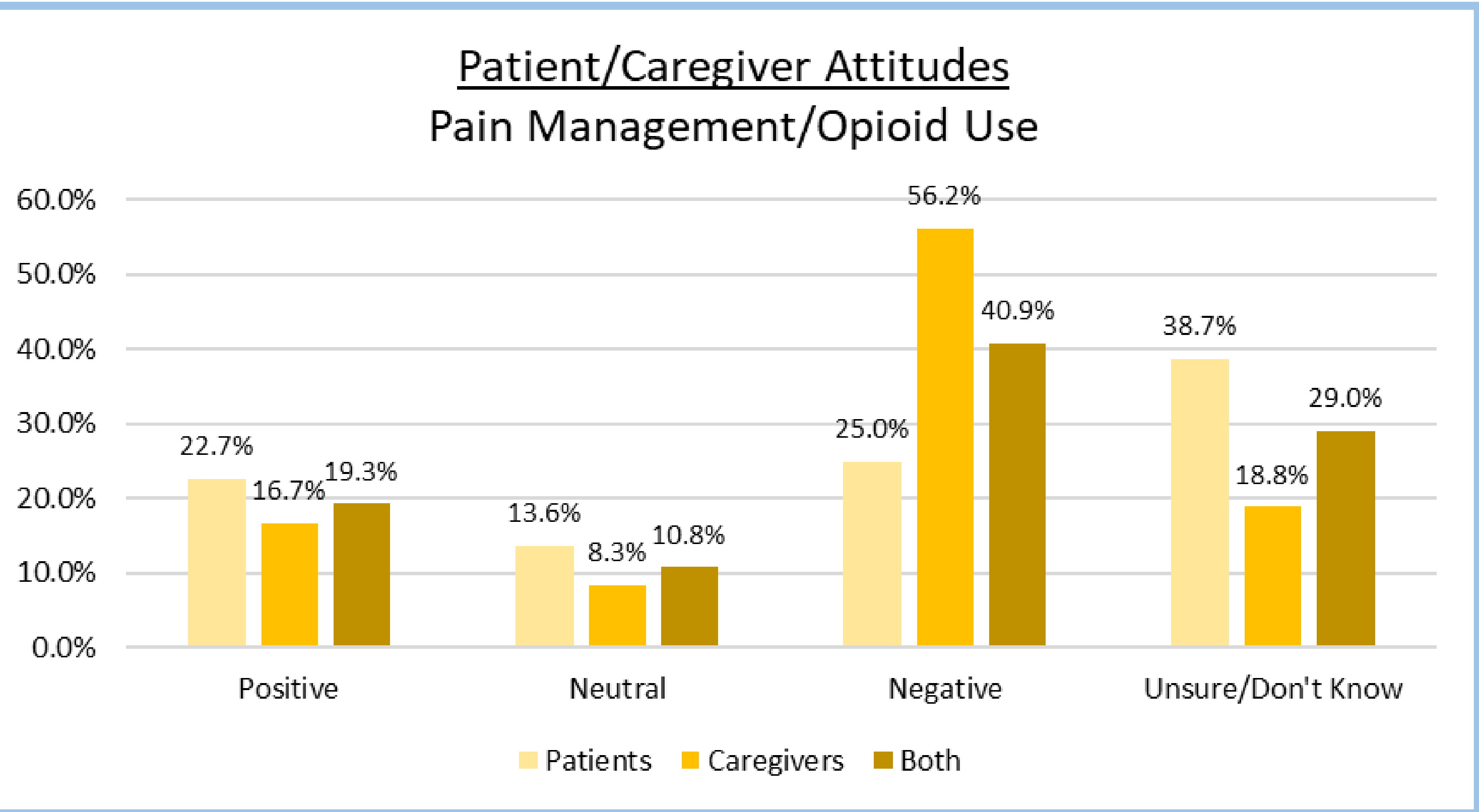
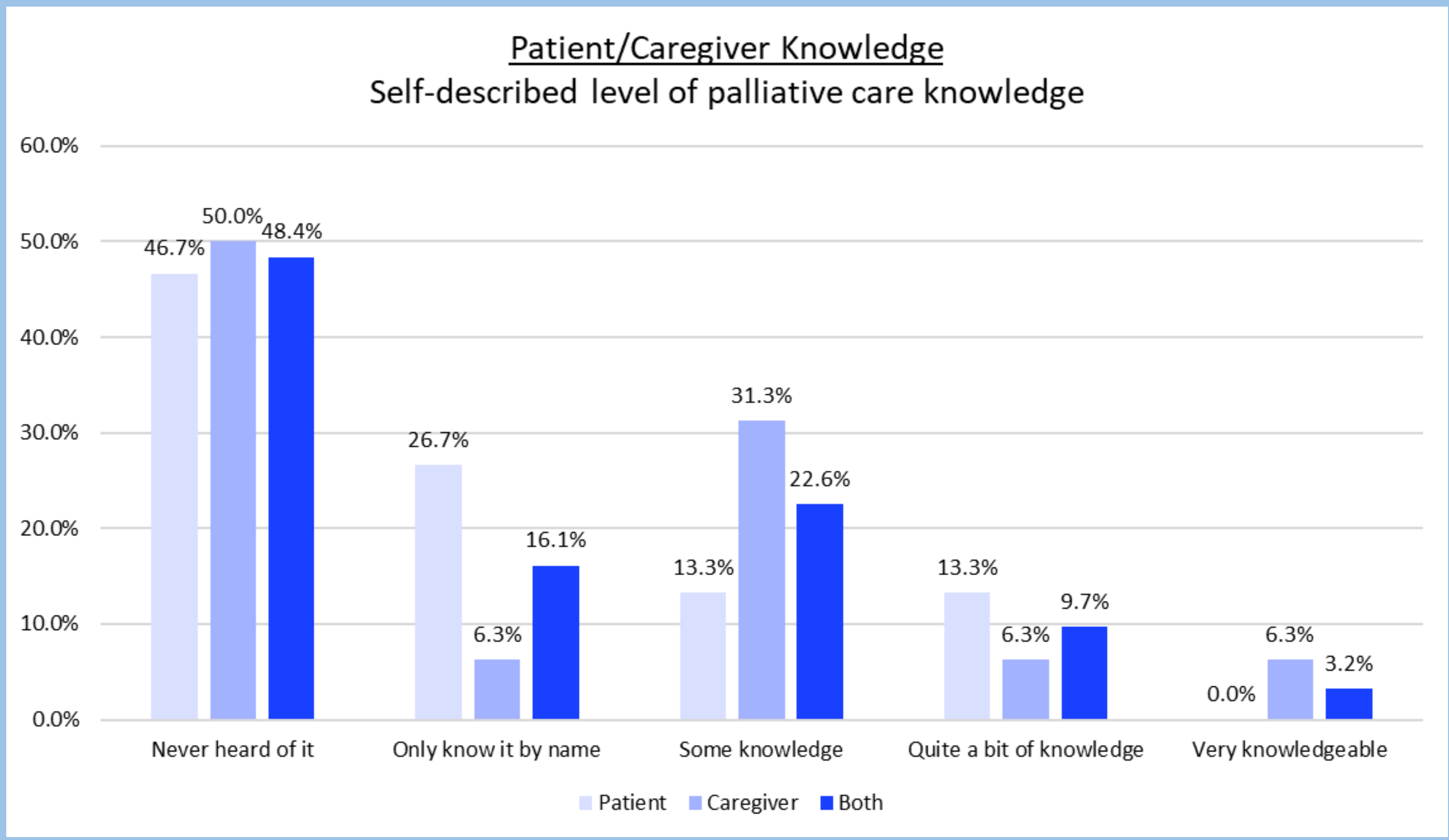
- Identified and adapted existing questionnaires, and created new items covering all eight domains of the 2018 NCP Clinical Practice Guidelines for Quality Palliative Care³.
- Elicited expert feedback and conducted 20 cognitive interviews (10 patients/caregivers; 10 clinicians) for content validity and understandability.
- Refined questionnaires (56 items for patients/caregivers; 95 items for clinicians) consisted of three sections measuring knowledge, attitudes, and confidence.
- Pilot testing using test-retest reliability was conducted with 30 clinicians and 28 patients/caregivers from a large, urban HHC agency.
- Descriptive statistics were calculated in Stata 17 using the first survey timepoint.

RESULTS

Table 1. Structure of the PC-KAC in HHC Questionnaires for Clinicians, Patients and Caregivers

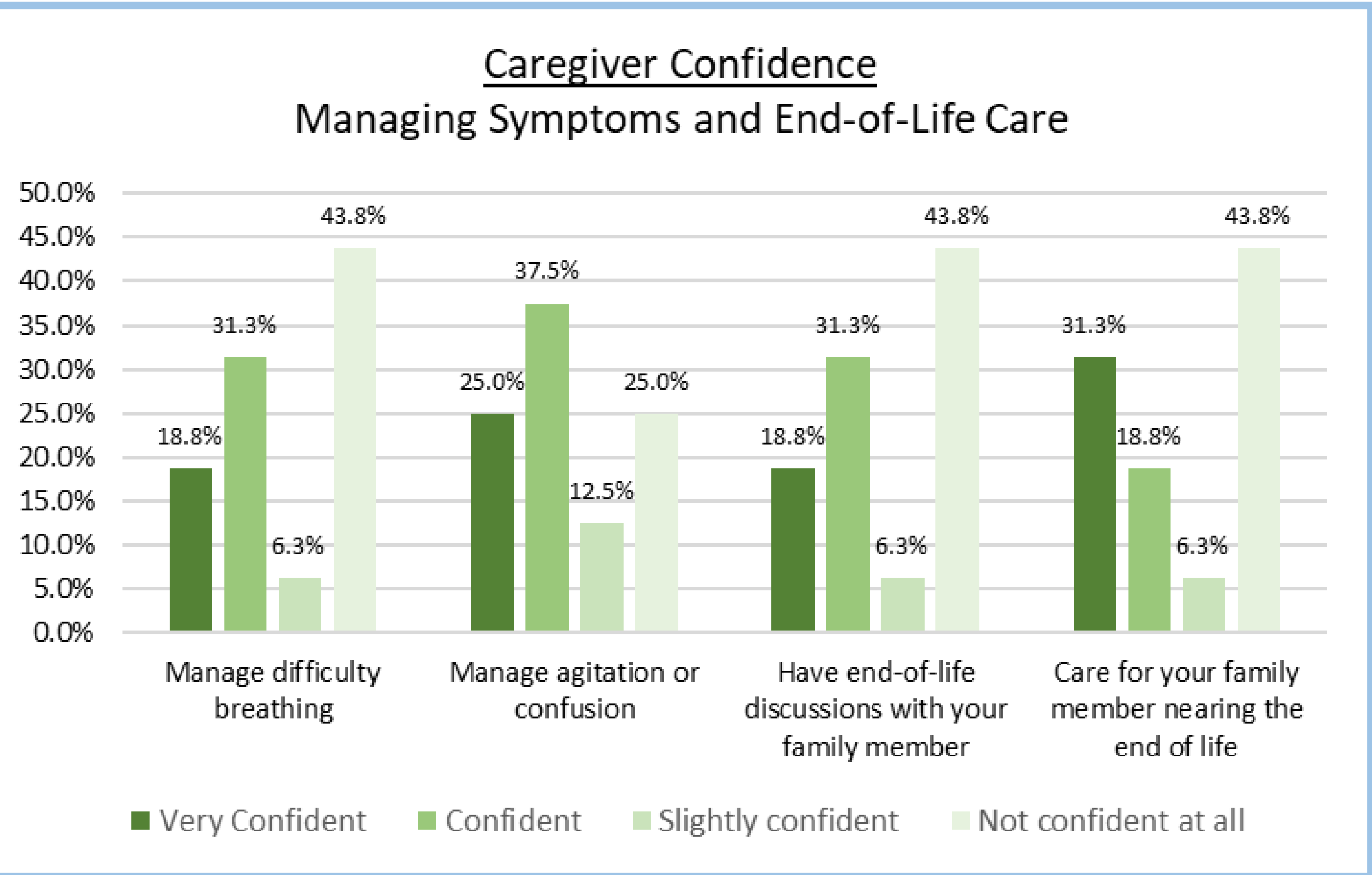
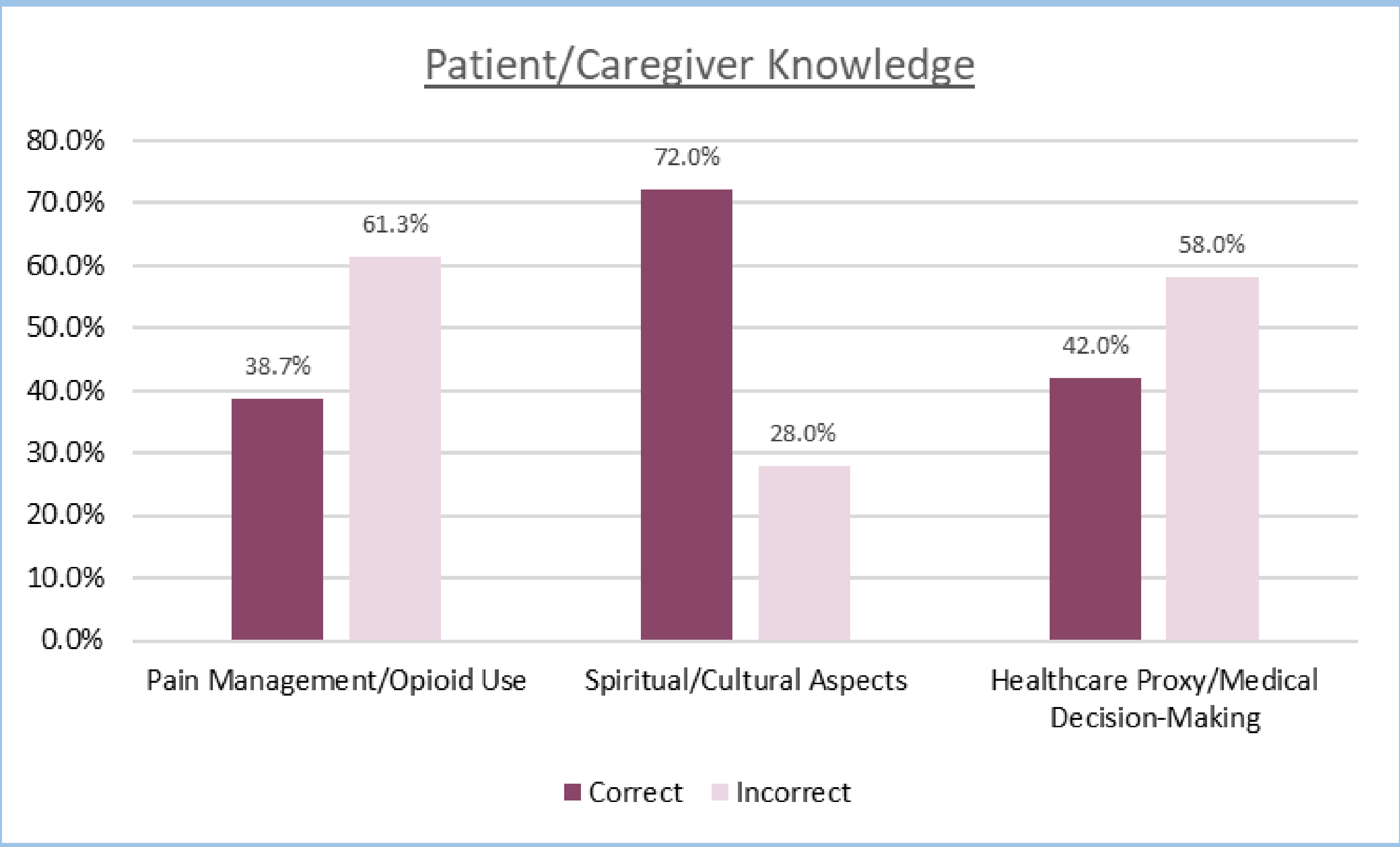
Concept/Audience	Knowledge		Attitudes		Confidence	
	Patient/Caregiver	Clinician	Patient/Caregiver	Clinician	Patient/Caregiver	Clinician
Domain	Number of Questions					
Structure and Processes of Palliative Care	19	5	5	9	1	4
Physical Aspects of Care	4	19	5	2	2	5
Psychological and Psychiatric Aspects of Care	1	6	3	1	1	1
Social Aspects of Care	0	2	0	3	0	1
Spiritual, Religious, and Existential Aspects of Care	1	2	0	2	1	1
Cultural Aspects of Care	2	2	2	3	2	1
Care of Patients Nearing the End of Life	2	5	3	10	1	2
Ethical and Legal Aspects	1	5	0	3	0	1
Total	30	46	18	33	8	16

Many patients and caregivers lacked knowledge about PC (1 item)



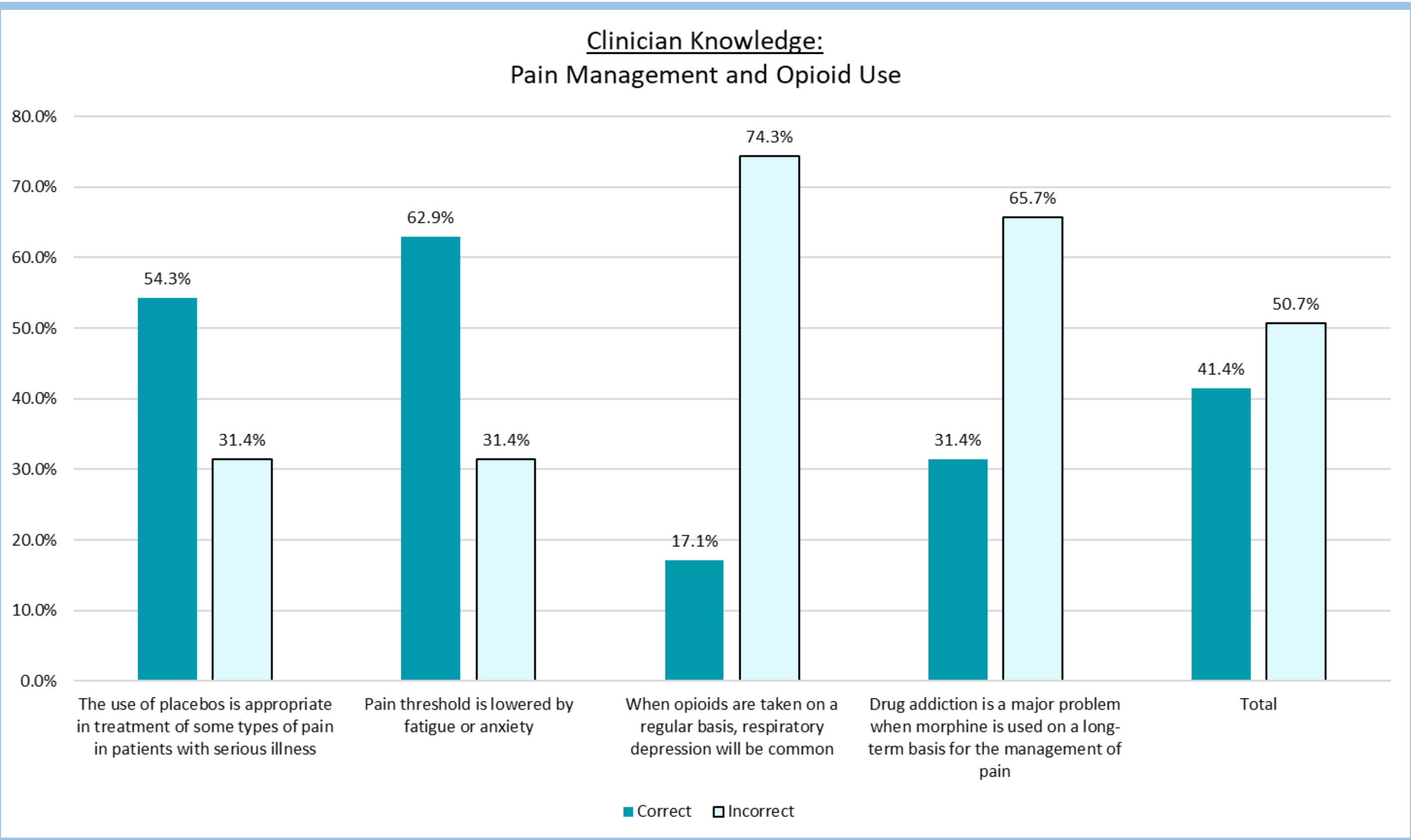
Knowledge gaps existed for pain management/opioid use (4 items), spiritual/cultural (2 items) and ethical/legal aspects (1 item) of PC

Attitudes regarding pain management/opioid use varied (3 items)



Caregivers experienced less confidence in handling difficulty breathing, agitation, EOL discussions, and EOL care (1 item each)

While clinicians demonstrated adequate knowledge overall, over 40% incorrectly answered questions about pain management/opioid use (4 items)



CONCLUSION

- Significant knowledge gaps regarding PC exist among HHC patients, caregivers and clinicians in the U.S.
- Findings also emphasize the need for a clear definition of PC that differentiate these services from hospice care.
- Misconceptions can impede informed decision-making, resulting in unmet care needs, increased hospitalizations and higher healthcare costs.
- Educational initiatives and training programs can address misconceptions and low confidence levels with aspects of PC.
- Broader dissemination of our questionnaire would help identify additional training and educational needs in the U.S. HHC setting and in other countries around the world.

REFERENCES

- Research Institute for Home Care. Home Care Chartbook 2023. Retrieved October 8, 2024 from <https://researchinstituteforhomecare.org/wp-content/uploads/Final-RIHC-Chartbook-2023-1.pdf>
- Center to Advance Palliative Care and Palliative Care Quality Collaborative (2023). Spotlight on Home-Based Palliative Care: Insights and Recommendations. Retrieved October 8, 2024 from: <https://www.capc.org/documents/download/1100/>.
- Ferrell, B. R., Twaddle, M. L., Melnick, A., & Meier, D. E. (2018). National Consensus Project Clinical Practice Guidelines for Quality Palliative Care Guidelines, 4th Edition. *J Palliat Med*, 21(12), 1684-1689.

FUNDING

Intramural Pilot Award from the Office of Scholarship and Research at the Columbia University School of Nursing

CONTACT INFORMATION

Ashley Chastain, DrPH, MPH
Senior Project Director
Columbia University School of Nursing
ac4192@cumc.columbia.edu

