

Breaking Barriers to AYA Mental Health Care: A Virtual Training and Supervision Program for Community Clinicians

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INTRODUCTION

- Adolescents and young adults (AYAs; ages 15–39) with cancer face significant psychosocial challenges during a critical developmental stage characterized by identity formation, independence, and growth.
- Cancer disrupts education, relationships, and career trajectories, often leading to increased distress, isolation, and depressive symptoms.
- Despite high levels of need, access to AYA-specific mental health care remains limited due to gaps in provider training and unequal access to psychosocial resources across settings.

OBJECTIVES

- To develop and implement a virtual clinician training program to improve AYA oncology mental health care capacity in community settings
- To increase clinician knowledge, confidence, and competence in supporting AYAs with cancer
- To expand access to developmentally informed, psychosocially responsive care through workforce training

METHODOLOGY

- The training program featured a 3-hour live, interactive online workshop led by an AYA oncology mental health expert. The curriculum was designed to highlight the unique developmental, cultural, and psychosocial factors shaping the lived experience of AYAs with cancer.
- Following the workshop, participants were invited to join four monthly, small-group supervision sessions, co-facilitated by licensed clinical social workers. These groups offered case consultation, peer learning, and practical strategies for integrating new skills into client care.
- Program evaluation was conducted through post-surveys and retrospective self-assessments measuring changes in knowledge, confidence, and competence in working with AYAs.

RESULTS

110 participants attended the 3-hour training session
 9 clinicians participated in the four-part supervision groups.

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

- “I feel much more competent in my practice with the AYA population after taking this training.”
- “I really valued having the combination of research and clinical cases to discuss while applying interventional resources for a case. I think this discussion will be helpful in my work with the AYA patient population moving forward.”
- “Having more knowledge about the impact of cancer on an AYA's life increases my confidence to provide the support needed on their journey.”
- Great overview of the unique and complex needs of AYAs. It helped us enter their world.

IMPLICATIONS

- Training improves clinician readiness to support AYAs with cancer
- Expands access to AYA-informed psychosocial care in community settings
- Supervision enhances skill retention and reduces provider isolation
- Model supports scaling workforce development to improve equitable AYA mental health care

Figure 1. Pre-Participation in 3-hour training self-report ratings (n=82)

Please rate the following. Prior to this course:

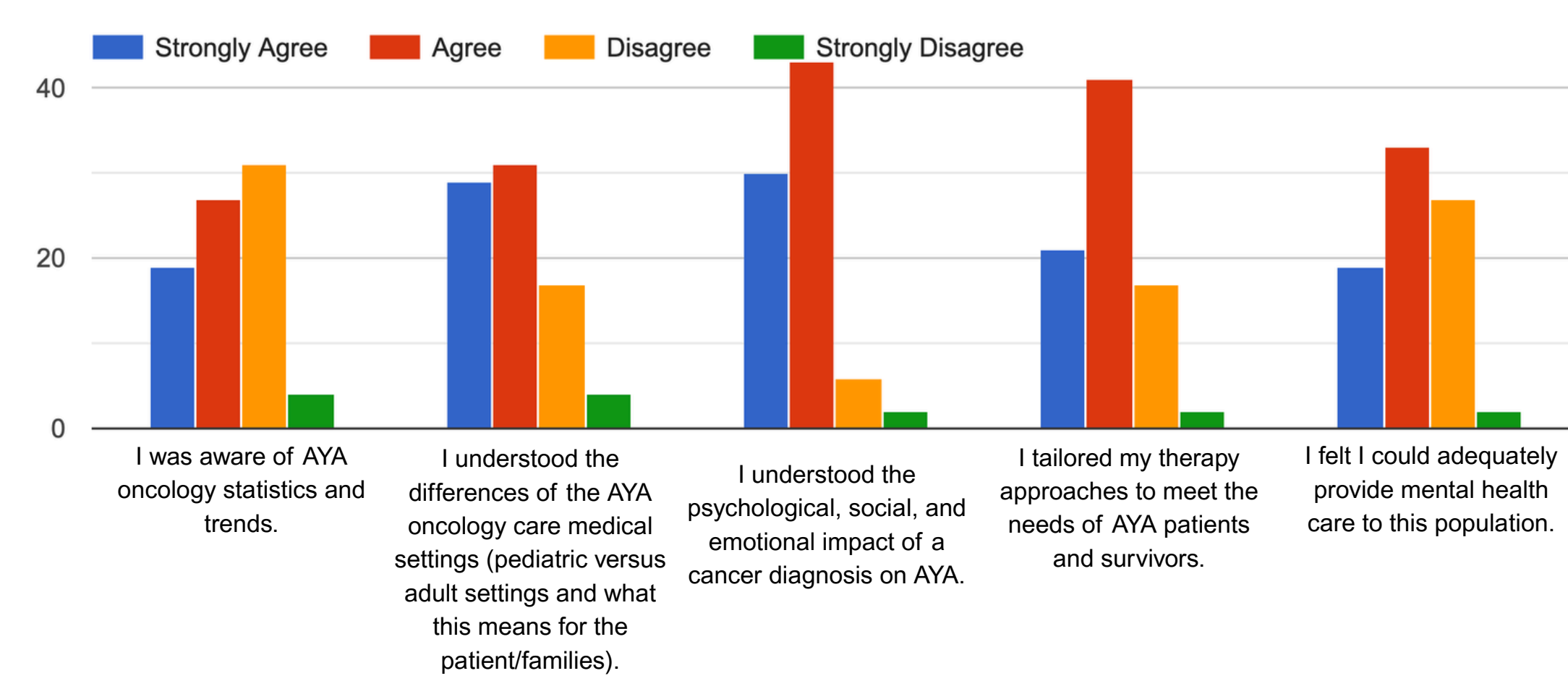


Figure 2. Post-Participation in 3-hour training self-report ratings (n=82)

Please rate the following. After this course:

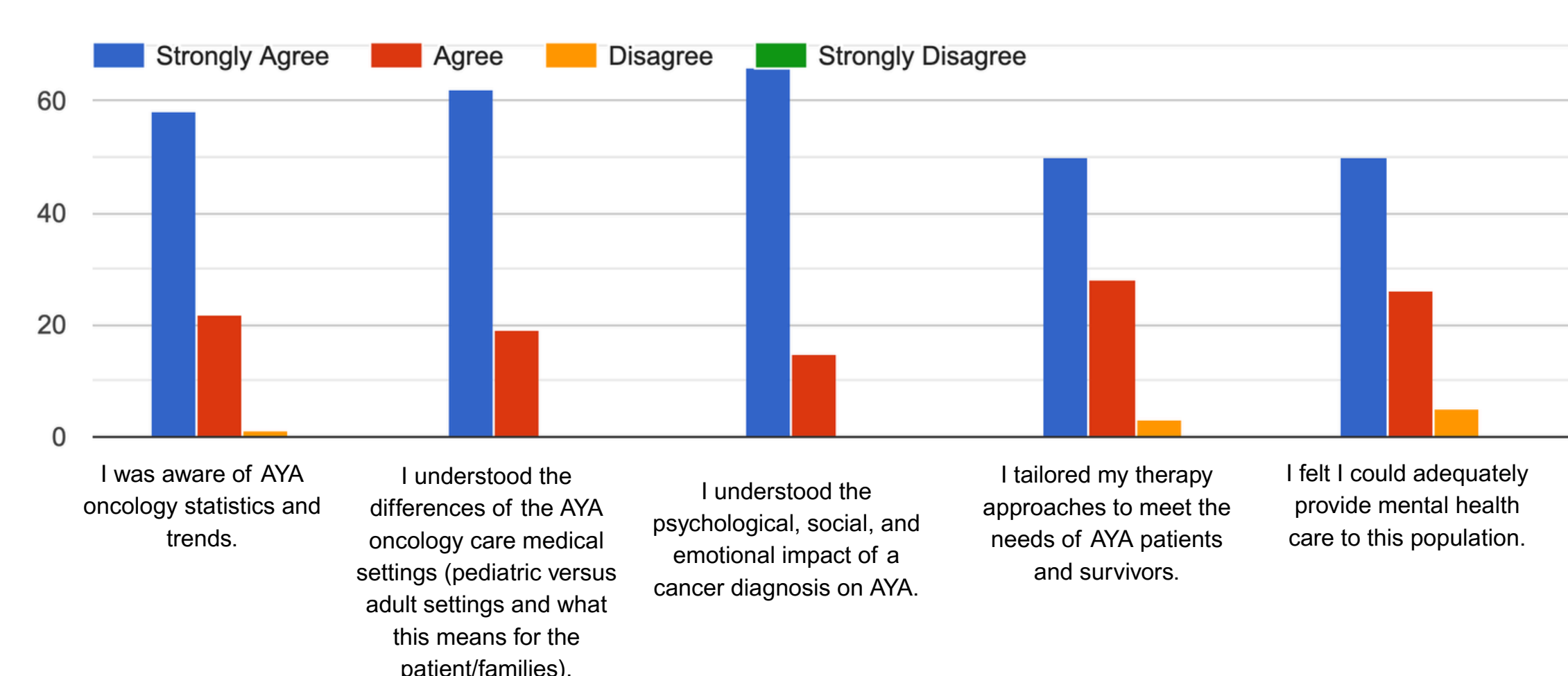


Figure 3. Post-Participation in 3-hour training outcomes (n=82)

Please rate the projected impact of this activity on your knowledge, competence, performance and patient outcomes.

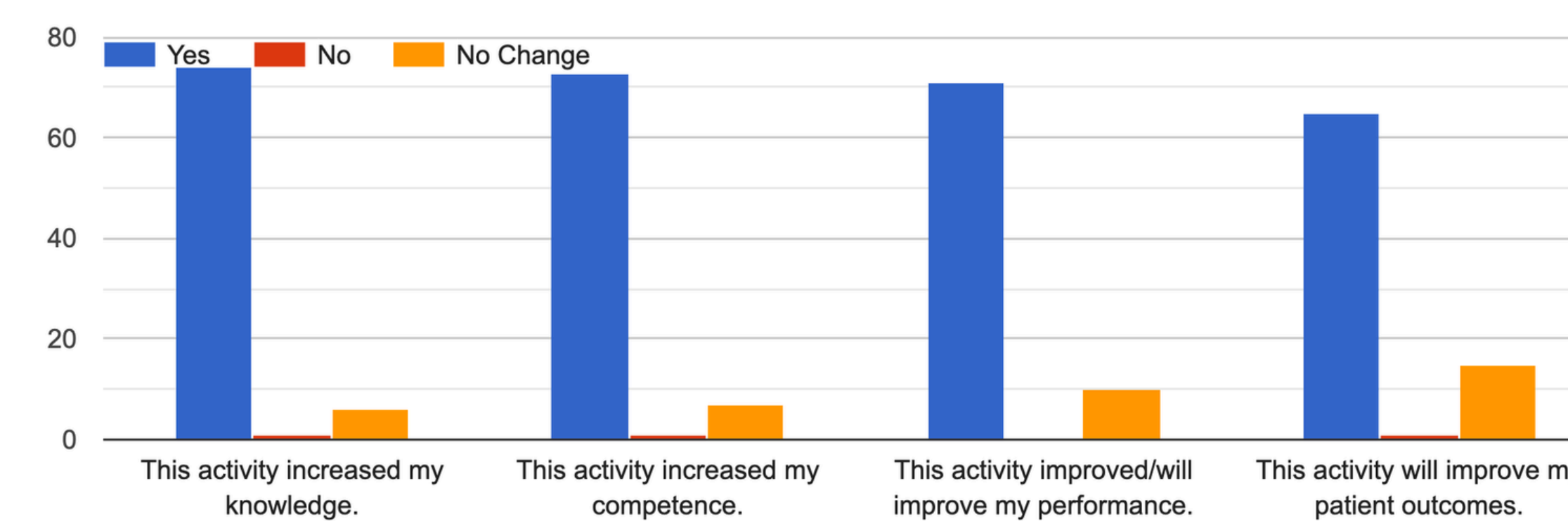


Figure 4. Post-Participation in small group series outcomes (n=6)

Please rate the projected impact of this activity on your knowledge, competence, performance and patient outcomes.

