

Improving the Clinical Learning Experience: Exploring impacts of a structured learning aid on medical student education within the paediatric department

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Objectives

To explore how the use of a structured clinical workbook can facilitate engagement and complement medical student teaching within the paediatric clinical environment.

Methods

- A mixed methods study was performed to assess the usefulness of the clinical workbook.
- 15 semi-structured interviews with 4th year medical students were undertaken during their paediatric rotations.
- Data was collected between September 2021 to September 2022. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim, with full consent of participants.
- Qualitative data derived from interviews was thematically analysed using Braun and Clarke's framework¹ Data saturation was reached.
- Thematic analysis was conducted by 2 researchers independently. Themes were then refined through an iterative process of discussion between the researchers.
- Quantitative data was collected using Likert scales from the same student groups.

Key Themes Identified

The use of the clinical workbook as:

1. A tool for consolidation of the curriculum
2. Providing a scaffold facilitating the development of adult learning skills
3. A method to provide alternate learning opportunities

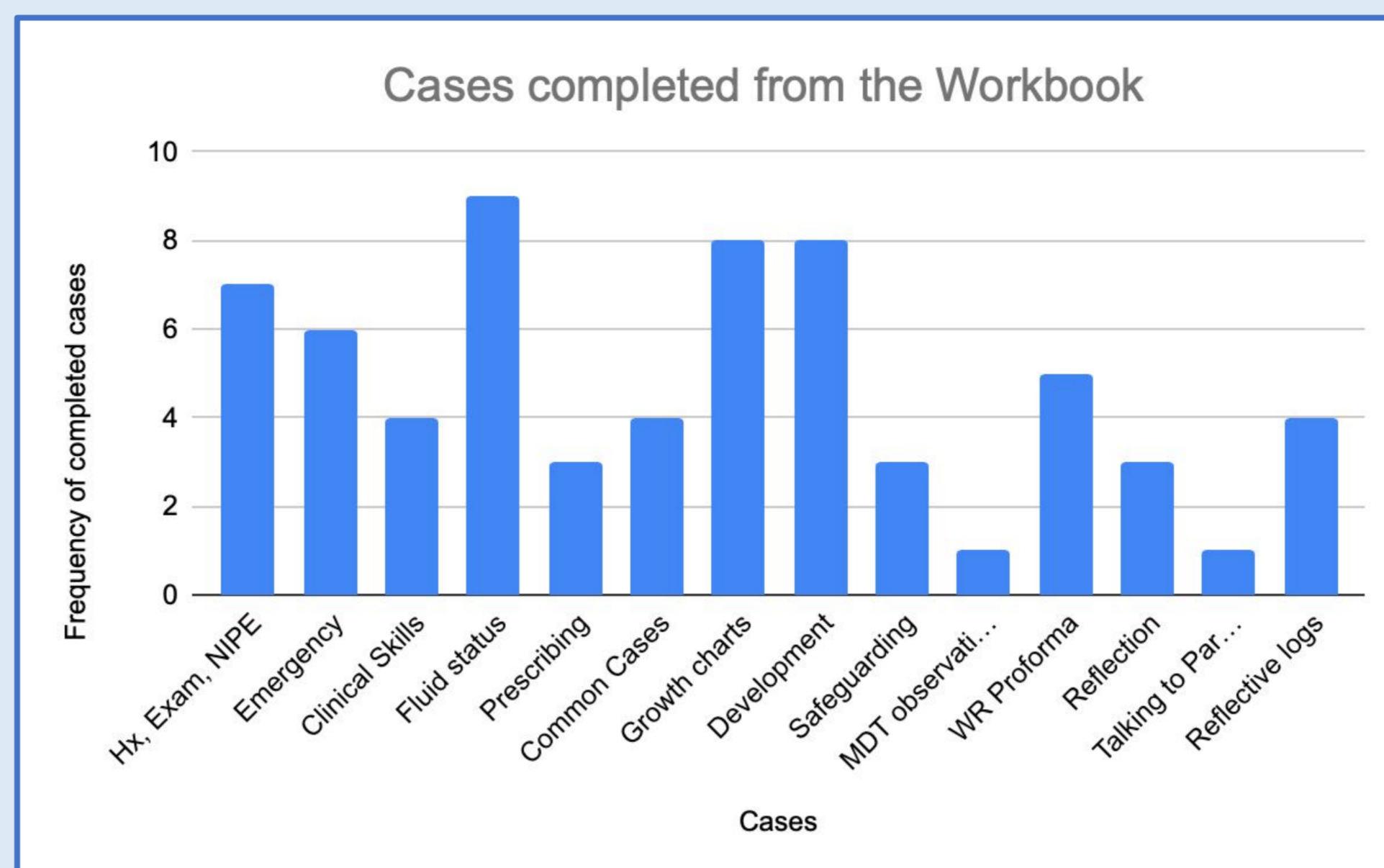


Figure 1. A Bar Chart showing cases chosen to be completed by the Medical students.

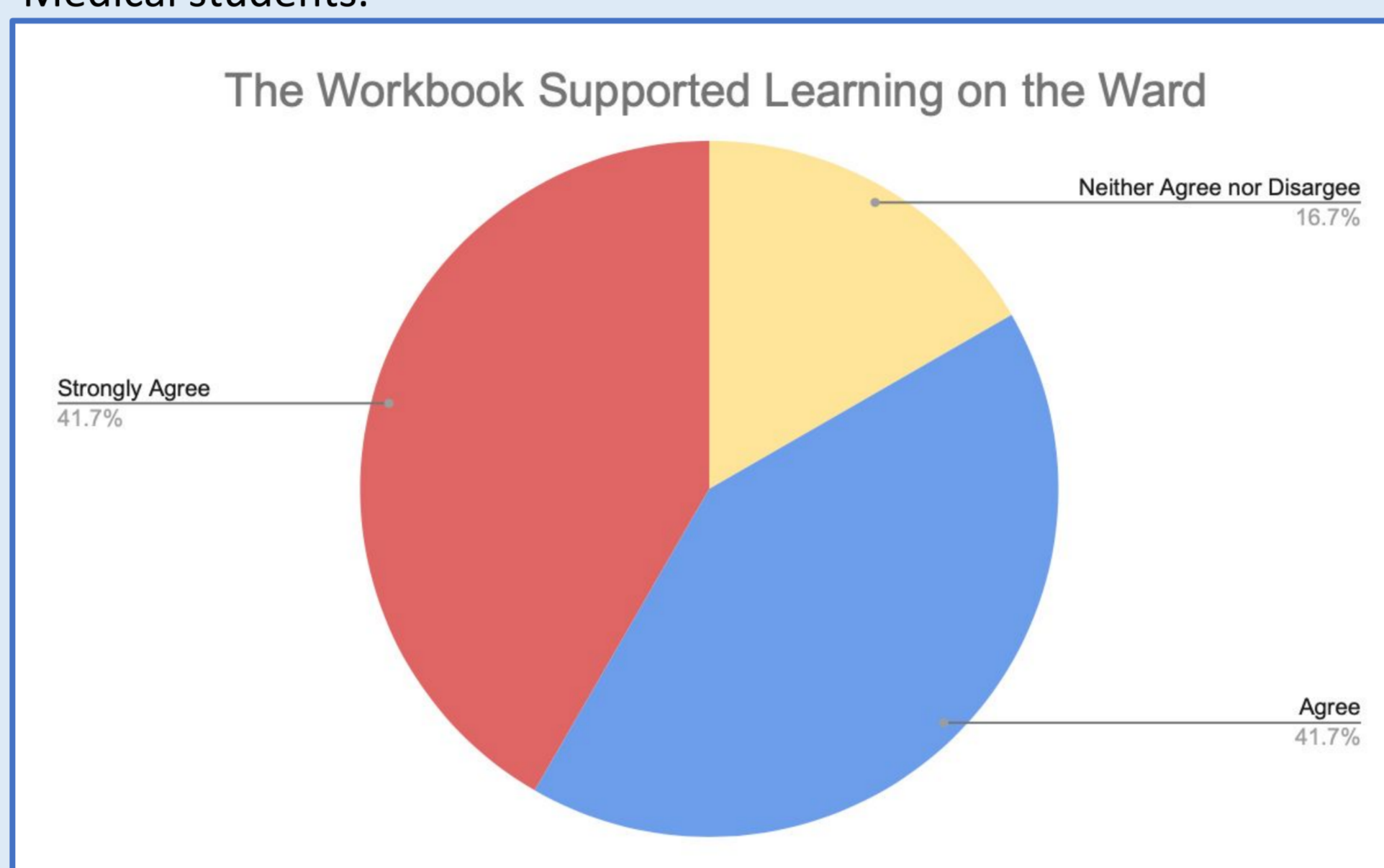


Figure 2. A Pie Chart showing Medical students' opinion on the Workbook supporting learning within the clinical environment.

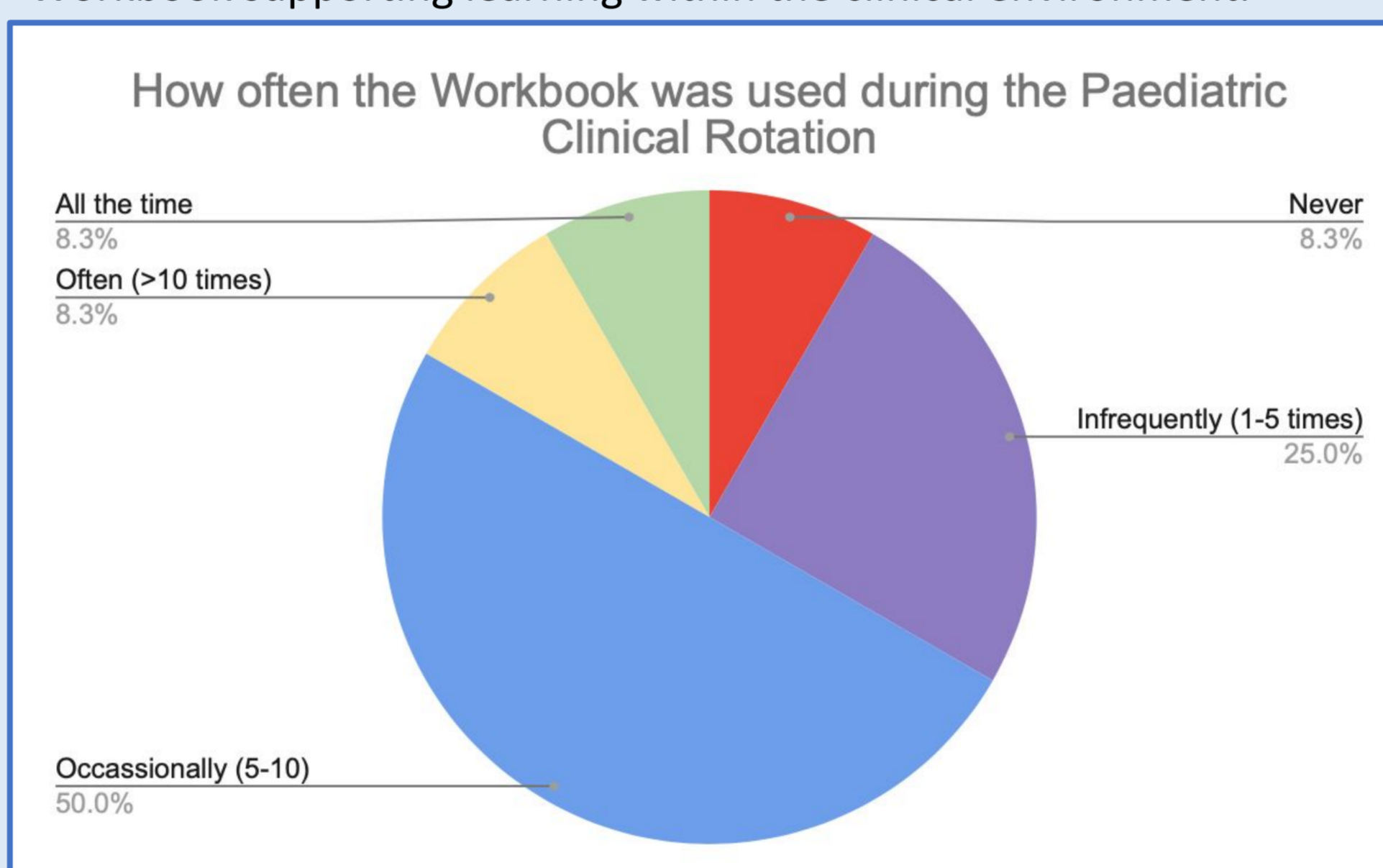


Figure 3. A Pie Chart showing how often the workbook was used during the 6 week clinical placement.

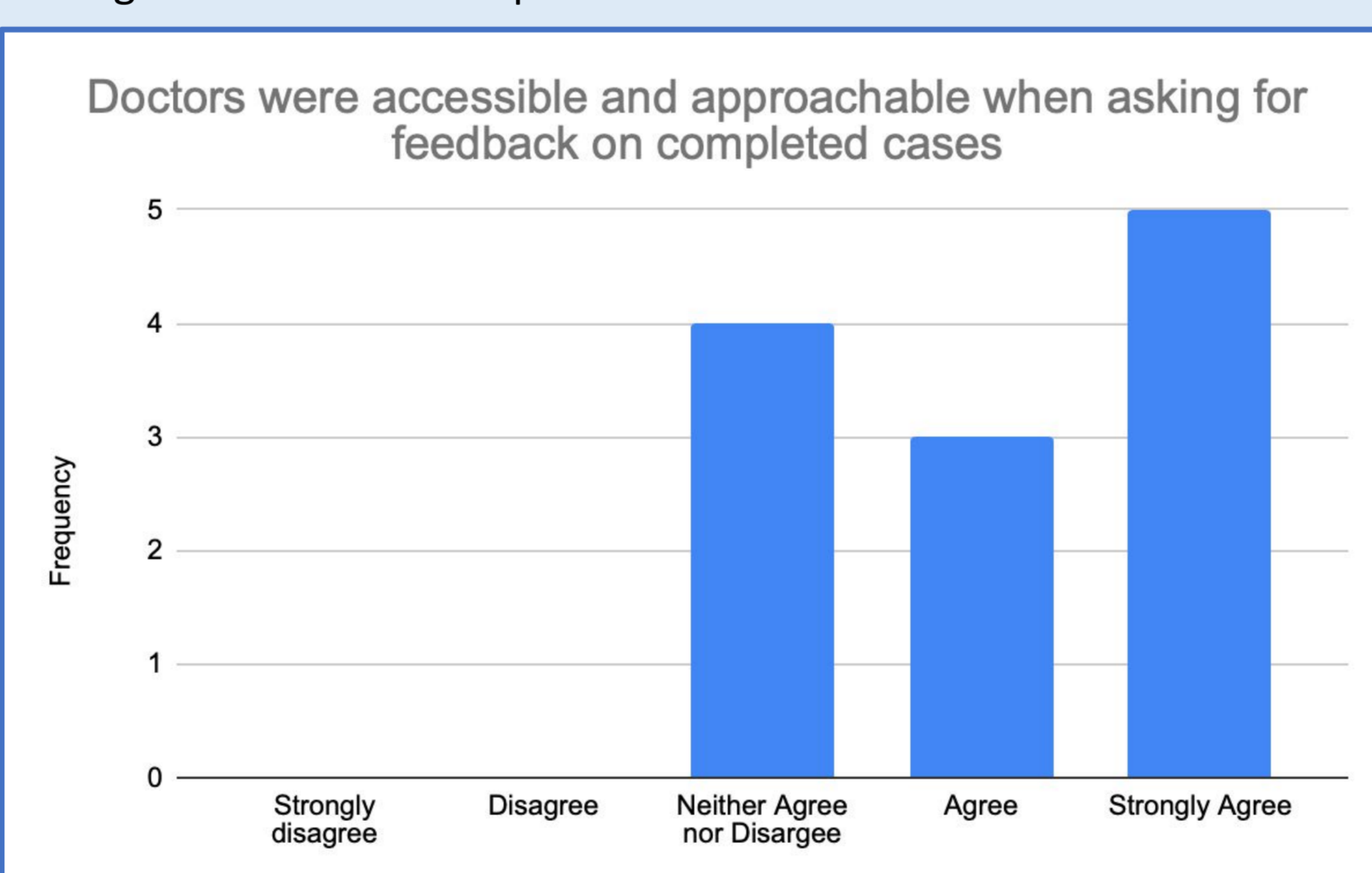


Figure 4. A Bar Chart showing medical students' opinion on the accessibility of doctors in providing feedback on the workbook cases.

Results

- 83% of students felt the workbook supported their learning.
- The workbook met needs, interests and the knowledge level of the individual learner.
- The workbook was used as a practical guide for clinical skills less frequently practised at undergraduate level.
- The workbook provided students with learning opportunities when ward teaching became unavailable due to service pressures.
- Students consolidated answers to the workbook from discussions with medical staff and through peer-led learning.

Areas to Improve

- Uncertainty about approaching busy doctors for feedback with a suggestion to provide answer sheets to facilitate independence.
- Barriers to complete the workbook included lack of time and prioritising compulsory course requirements.
- Students demonstrated different views on their preferred access methods: virtual vs. hard copy.

Conclusion

- The workbook was a useful aid to encourage self-directed learning and consolidation of knowledge within the clinical environment.
- The workbook provided a learning scaffold that improved engagement, active learning and participation.
- The workbook provided students with clinical learning opportunities when direct bedside teaching was unavailable, and increased familiarity with practical prescribing and charting activities that were not otherwise readily accessible.

References

1. Virginia Braun & Victoria Clarke (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3:2, 77-101

Acknowledgements

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