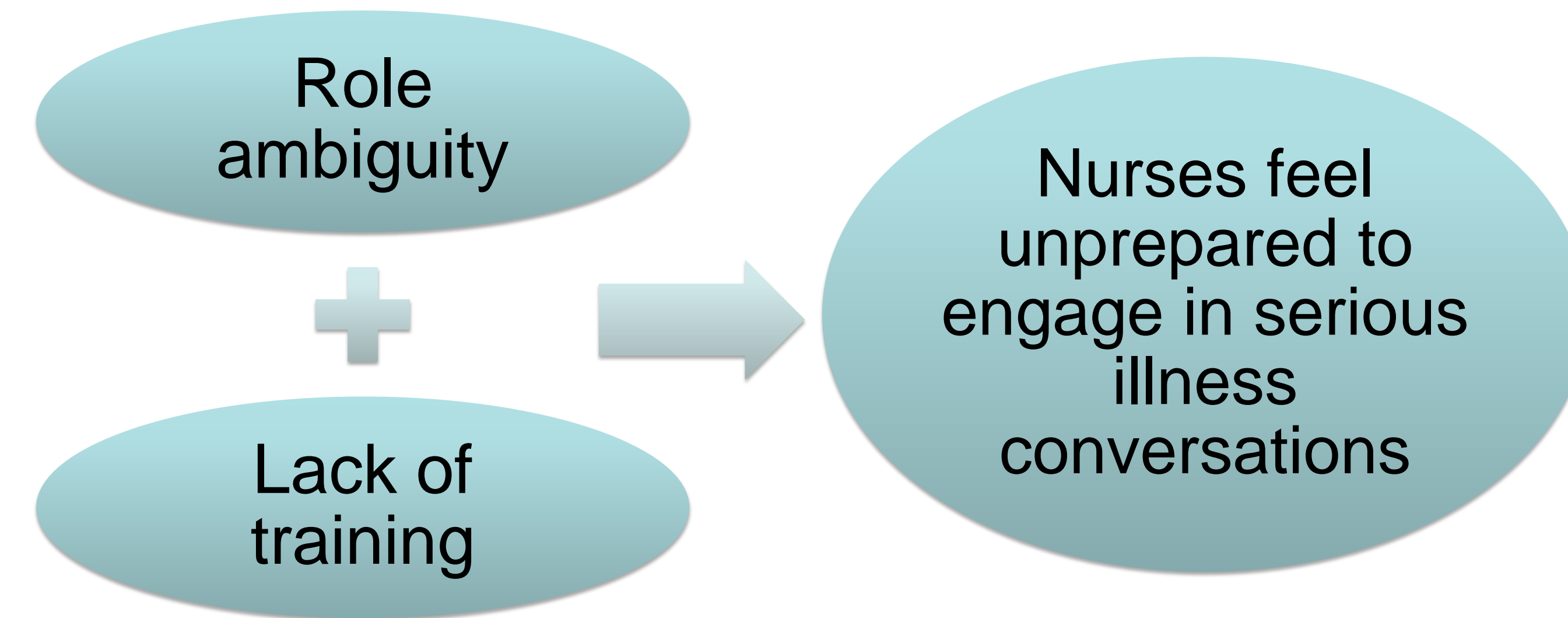


Who's Job Is It Anyway? Working to Improve Serious Illness Communication Skills Across Disciplines

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Statement of the Problem



Background/Literature Review

- The Emergency Department (ED) is a critical site of care delivery for those with serious illness. The ED environment poses unique challenges, and palliative care needs are prevalent.⁴
- Nurses are on the frontlines in EDs, poised to assist patients and families navigating difficult decision-making. It is recommended that they receive training and education on palliative and end of life care.³
- Serious illness communication training has improved the skills of physicians and nurse practitioners², and has increased self-reported skill and confidence for ICU RNs.¹



Communication is a learned expertise

Purpose/Aims or Objectives

- Develop and implement an Emergency Department RN-specific communication skills curriculum
- Examine nurses' confidence level when approaching and engaging in challenging serious illness conversations before and after training



Methods

- Course design adapted the VitalTalk™ interactive teaching methodology to be tailored for ED RNs, using case-based instruction with ED-specific scenarios
- Format included didactic lessons, demonstrations, and role play with standardized patients
- Following the full day training, participants completed a survey which measured their confidence post-course as well as looking back to before the course
- Results of this observational study were analyzed using Wilcoxon signed rank

See One,



Do One,

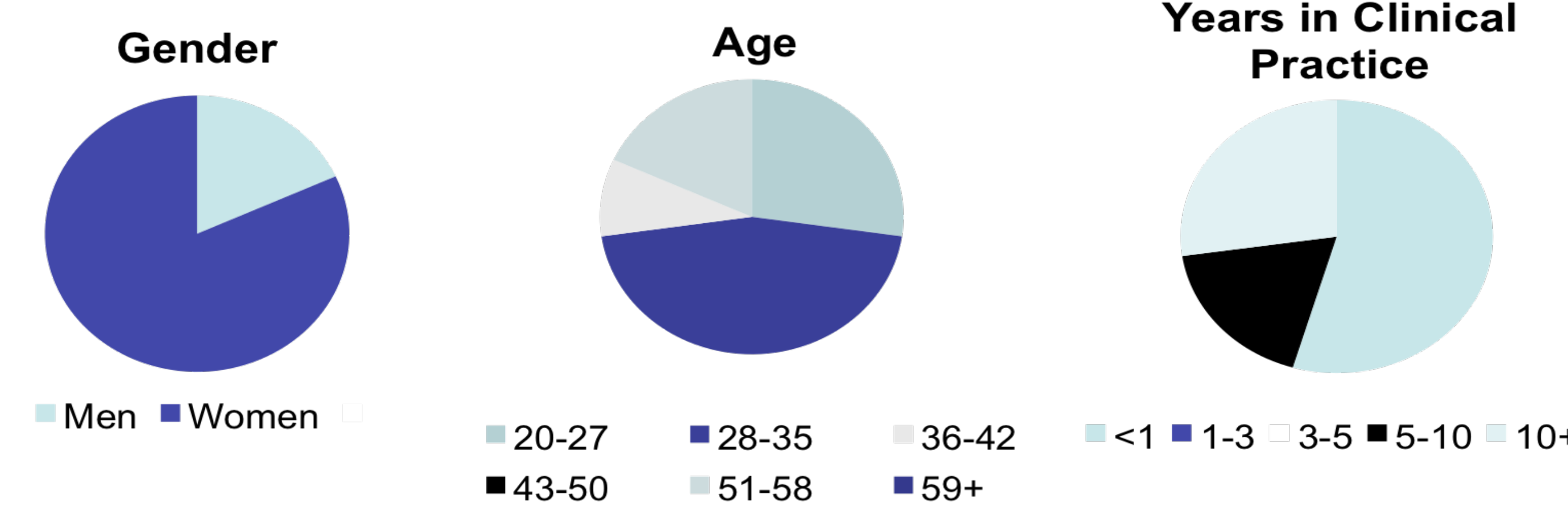


Practice!



Findings/Results

n=11 (10 ED RNs, 1 CT Surgery RN)



Overall, how well prepared did you feel you were able to do the following? (1-7)	Look Back Mean (SD)	Post Mean (SD)	Change
Reinforce difficult news to a patient/family about their/loved one's illness?	3.18 (±1.7)	5.27 (±1.0)	2.09*
Discuss treatment options, including comfort care, with seriously ill patients and/or their families?	2.91 (±1.6)	5.00 (±1.1)	2.09*
Elicit a patient's goals of care?	3.09 (±1.5)	5.45 (±0.9)	2.36*
Discuss hospice care?	2.91 (±1.8)	4.82 (±1.9)	1.91*
Reinforce prognosis?	3.09 (±1.6)	5.09 (±1.1)	2.00*

*p<0.01

Conclusions/Implications

- A one-day, interactive serious illness communication skills course demonstrated significant increase in bedside Emergency Department nurses' confidence levels in all areas measured.
- Participants reported desire for interdisciplinary participation in skills training.



- Since completion of the ED RN intervention, TalkVermont has facilitated additional courses that have included participants from disciplines including: MDs, NPs, PAs, RNs, CM/SWs, Chaplains, and Educators. The TalkVermont initiative developed with the mission of improving serious illness communication skills across the University of Vermont Health Network.

- Three month follow-up surveys identified that nurses are using the skills they learned during the course, and that they desire continued skills practice to further increase confidence when approaching serious illness conversations.
- Additional evaluation is needed to determine feasibility of ongoing skills practice, with the goal of maintaining confidence in and utilization of serious illness communication skills.
- Future direction may include:
 - Regularly scheduled skills "refresher" courses
 - Weekly or daily ED "coaching rounds" to support primary palliative care at the bedside

Limitations

- Small sample size
- Implementation requires moderate financial investment

Acknowledgements/References

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