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Building Therapeutic Doctor-Patient Relationships through Effective Healthcare Communication



Changi General Hospital
SingHealth

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Delivering Care that Matters.

Introduction

In the pursuit of value healthcare, the patient experience is often left out of the equation and not properly understood or measured.

The Changi General Hospital (CGH) Patient Experience encompasses the total value of all direct and indirect interactions, across all touchpoints, with patients and their families in their care journey. This includes the wide range of interactions that patients have with the healthcare system, and aspects of healthcare delivery that patients value highly. Patient experience is not merely about providing a pleasant healthcare environment, or delivering efficient and effective services. It involves empowering employees to engage patients, so as to deliver patient-centred care.

To have improved health outcomes, the following are essential: (i) a prepared and proactive team of clinicians, (ii) who interact productively, (iii) with informed and activated patients.

It is thus critical for clinicians to learn how to build a therapeutic relationship, through effective healthcare communication, and to collaboratively develop patient-centred care plans.

This supports the CGH focus areas of improving productivity, improving patient experience, and developing competency. These focus areas are in line with Ministry of Health (MOH) initiatives to move beyond healthcare, to health; and beyond quality, to value.

Methodology

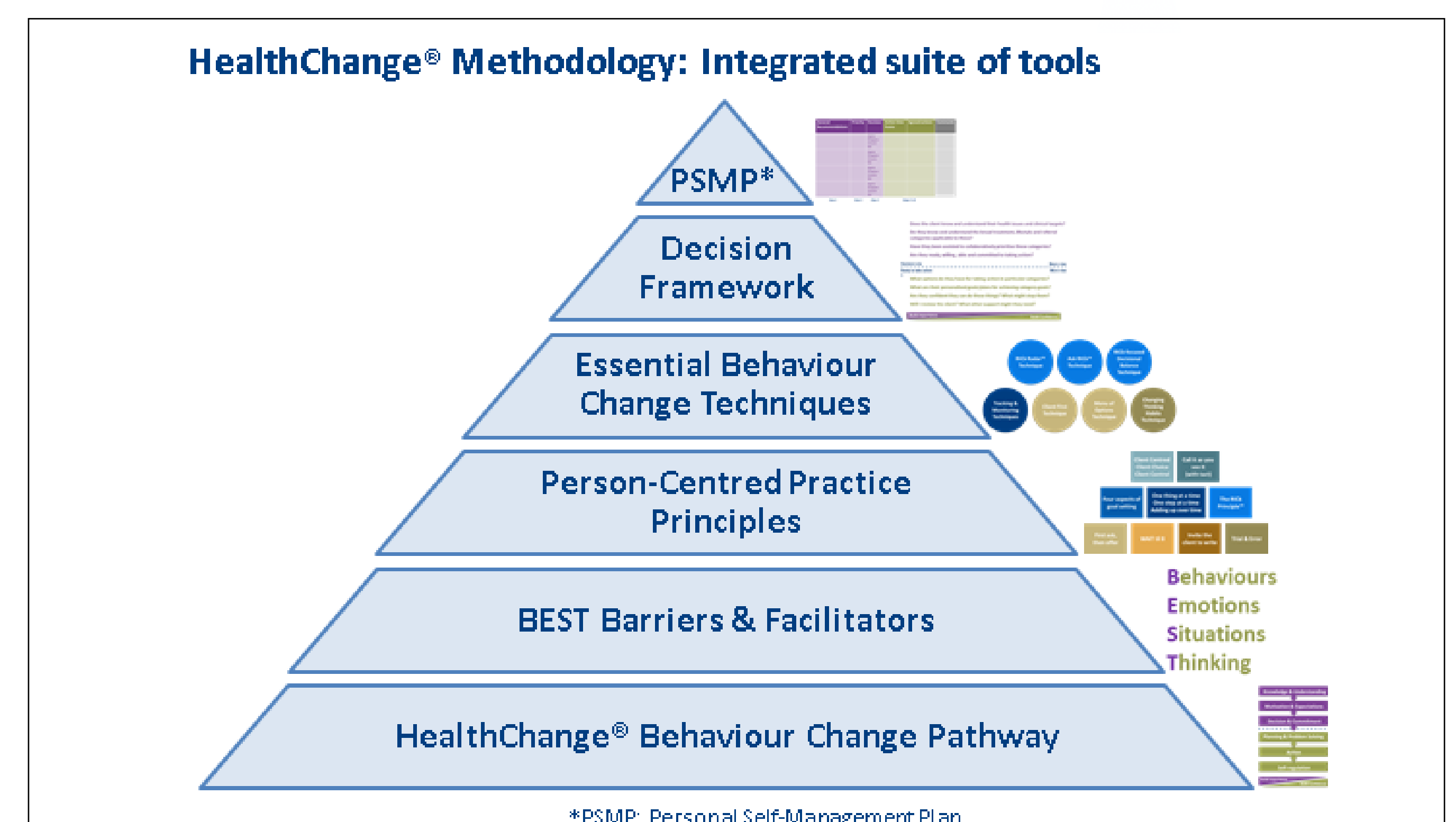
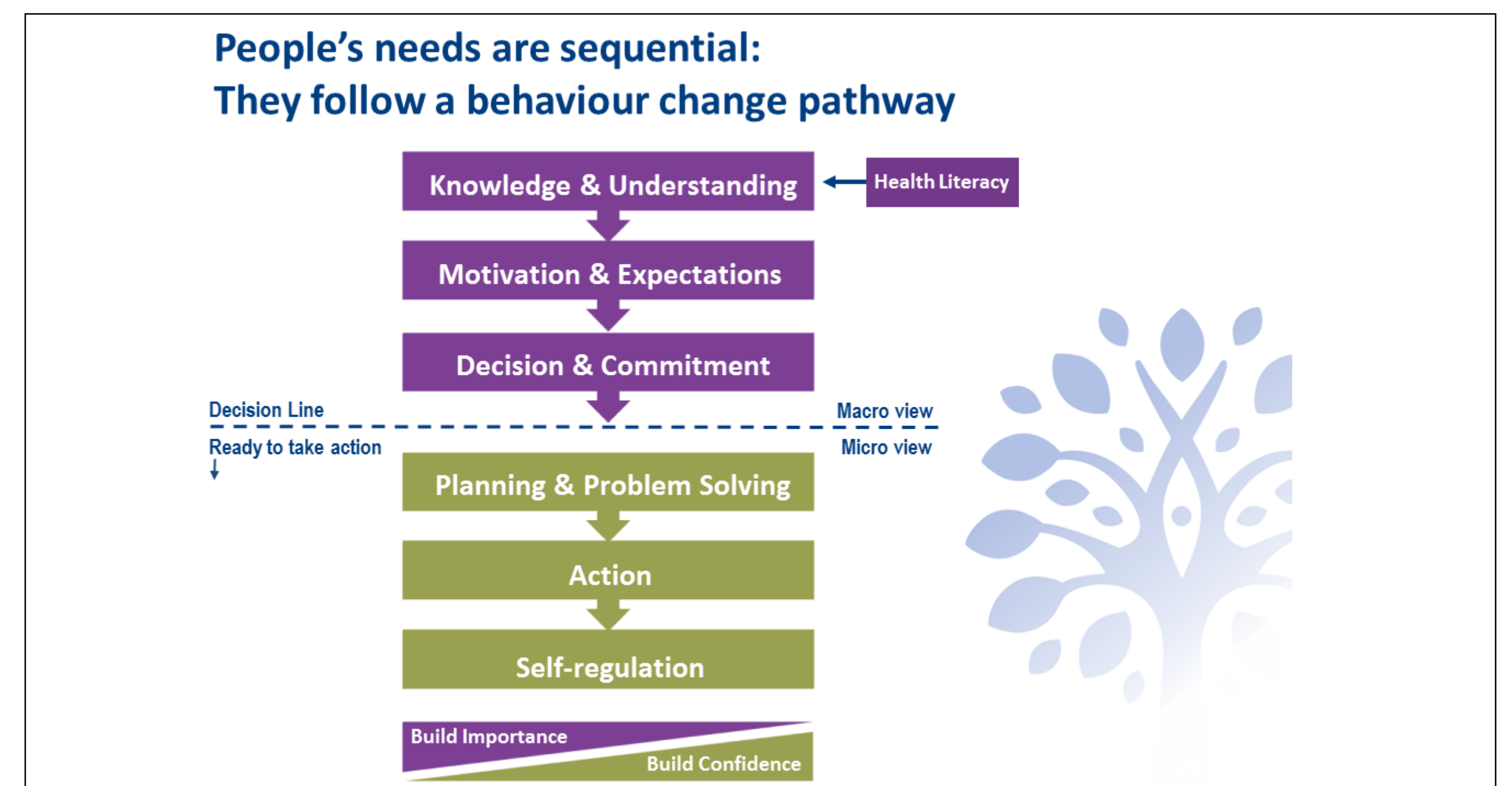
The Patient Experience Module is a one-day course comprising of an *Effective Healthcare Communication Workshop* (1.5 hours) and a *Person-centred Care Using HealthChange® Methodology Workshop* (6 hours).

The first workshop covers “The 3 Languages of Effective Healthcare Communication (ACE): Attitude, Careful Inquiry and Empathy”.

- Attitude – having positive regard towards the patient, and ensuring privacy and confidentiality. This involves taking a warm, genuine and non-judgmental stance.
- Careful Inquiry – collecting accurate data regarding our patients’ conditions and experiences is vital for diagnosis and treatment planning. This is achieved through active listening, being present, and asking appropriate questions.
- Empathy – to convey empathy to patients, a range of verbal and non-verbal skills may be utilised.

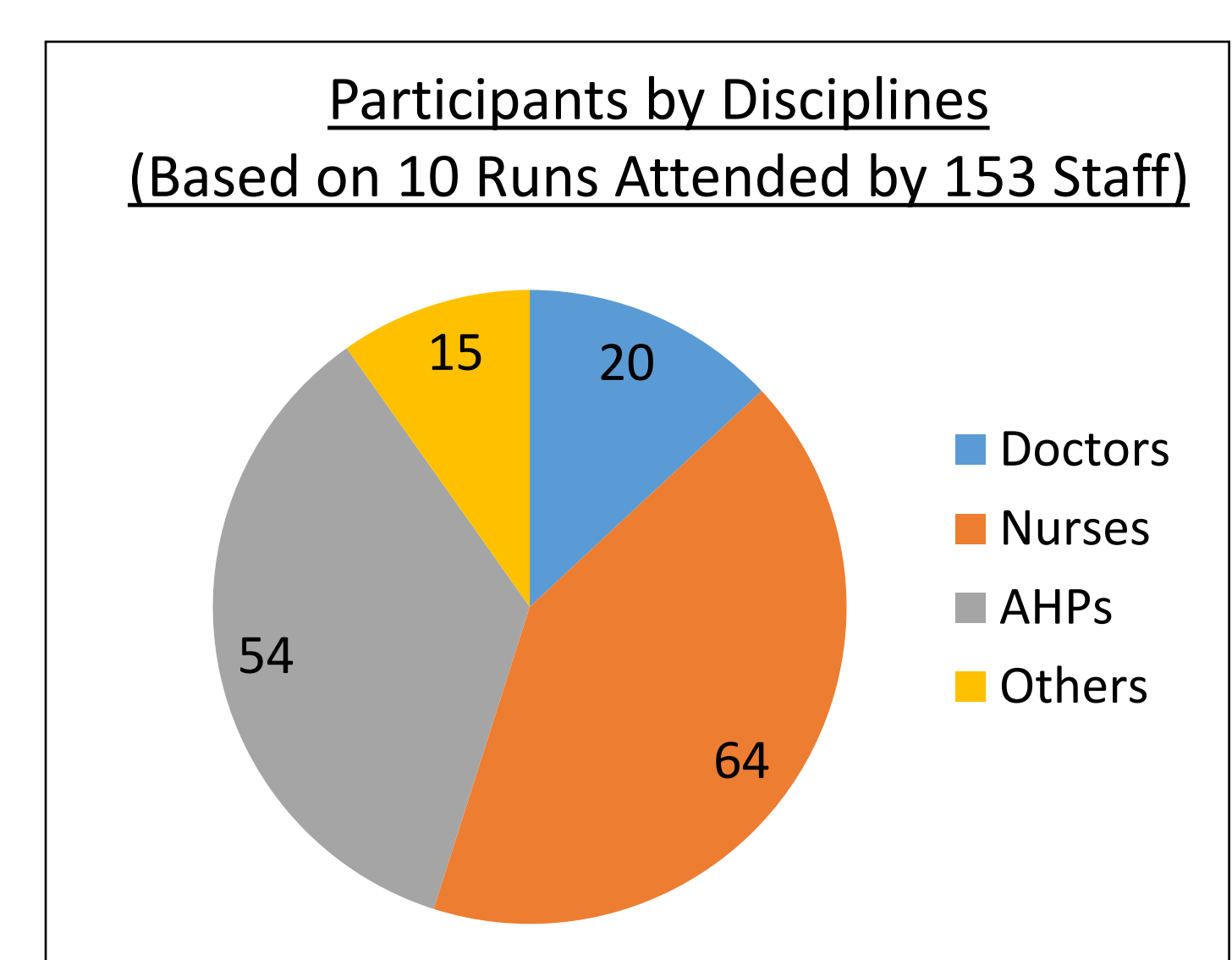
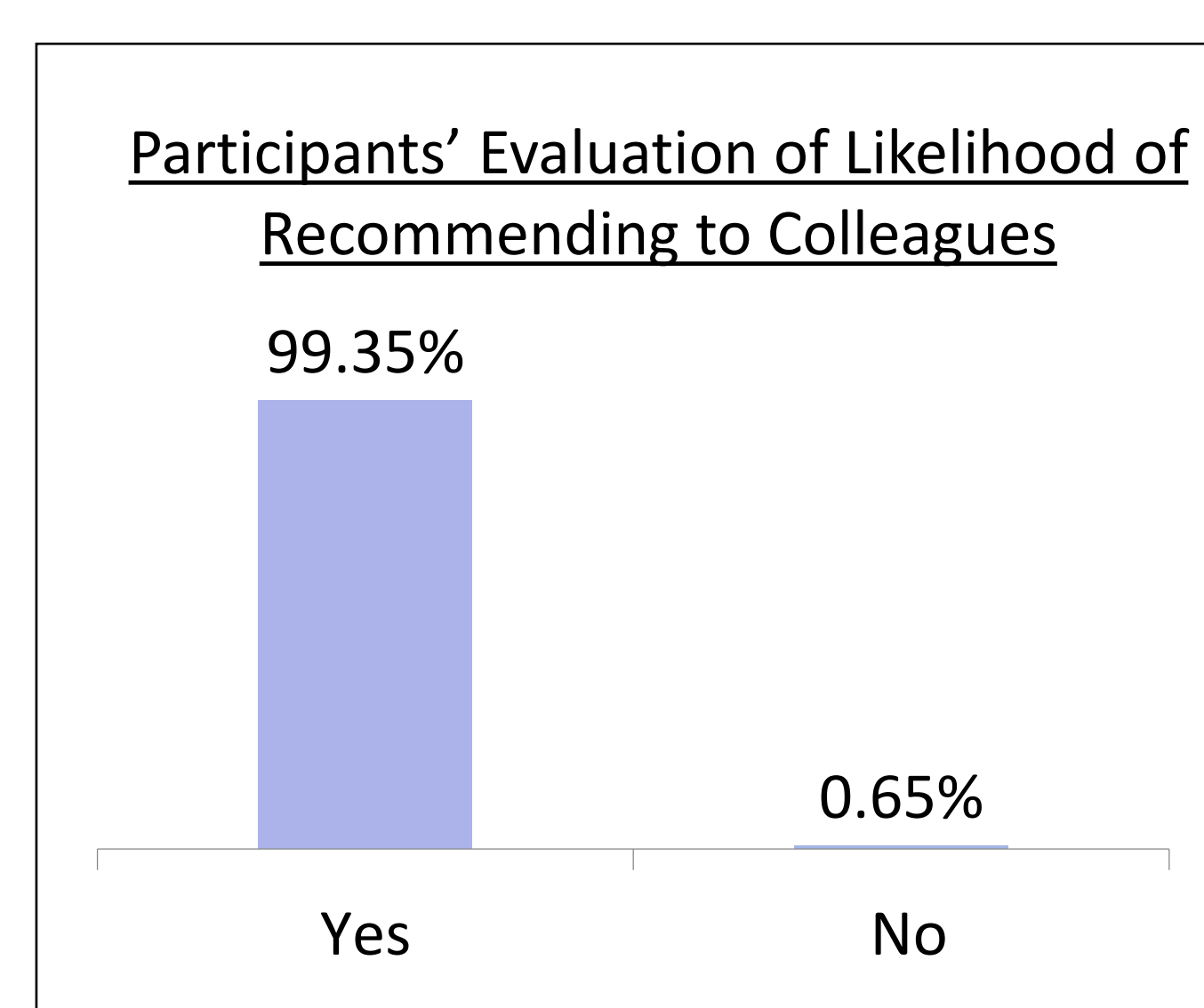
The second workshop, a propriety course on “HealthChange® Methodology”, uses an integrated suite of tools (illustrated in diagram) to help clinicians effectively promote behaviour change in their patients, to increase patients’ treatment adherence. The workshop content includes:

- A conceptual behaviour change pathway – to help clinicians quickly assess patients’ readiness to take action (outlined in diagram).
- A set of person-centred practice principles and behaviour change techniques – to equip clinicians with skills to carry out patient-centred consultations, and meet patients where they are at.
- A functional way of thinking about barriers to action and facilitators for change – to assist clinicians in recognising common barriers to engaging in treatment and working with patients to overcome these barriers.
- A 10-step decision framework – to guide clinicians in identifying when and why a patient is unlikely to adhere to recommendations, then applying the appropriate principles and techniques. This includes helping patients to understand their conditions and treatment options, identify personal motivators, make fully-informed decisions, take actions, and self-regulate for improved outcomes.
- An effective way to document consultations – to record treatment, lifestyle and referral actions to be taken patients.



Results

Participants of the one-day course were CGH-employed healthcare staff across various disciplines (i.e., doctors, nurses, allied health). They provided an overall mean rating of 4.7 (out of a maximum of 5) for the course. The mean rating for content relevance and usefulness to their current work was 4.5 (out of a maximum of 5). Almost all participants (99.35%) reported that they would recommend the course to their colleagues.



Conclusion

Having The Patient Experience Module course listed as a competency for CGH-employed clinicians allows the hospital, as an organisation, to promulgate a culture of quality care – through patient engagement.

CGH-employed staff who have attended the course largely rated it as relevant and useful to their current work, and would recommend it to their colleagues.

Moving forward, the course will be endorsed by the IPSQ AM-EPIC Quality, Safety and Patient-centric Framework Program on patient-centred care.

This supports the CGH focus areas of improving productivity, improving patient experience, and developing competency. These are in line with MOH initiatives to move beyond healthcare, to health; and beyond quality, to value.



Our team of CGH HealthChange® Methodology trainers