Embracing TECHNOLOGIES to Conduct VIRTUAL COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS Training for SingHealth Polyclinics Nurses

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Singapore Healthcare Management 2021

Polyclinics SingHealth

SHM_CO022

Introduction

The communication skills course was introduced to equip healthcare professionals to communicate and engage patients and their families effectively, and to appreciate verbal and non-verbal communication styles in the practice setting.

Nursing department embarked on this course for registered nurses with the aim of improving communication and enhancing clinical care.

In the design of the course, the team deliberated on what was relevant for nurses, obtained ideas from the clinics, and focused on common difficult communication situations.

Two face-to-face courses were conducted in July and November 2019.

Problem Statement & Motivation

The face-to-face training was put on hold in 2020 in view of COVID-19 outbreak safe distancing measures. Continuing education is a key to strengthen care processes, thus virtual platform provides a means for education to continue without disruption during infectious disease outbreak.

Aim

Leveraging on technology via Virtual Training to overcome challenges in traditional teaching to maintain the continuity of learning.

Methodology

In Feb 2021, the blended Virtual Training concept was introduced to continue training on good communication skills.

- The course consist of didactic lecture and 4 role-play stations in breakout rooms using internet laptop attended by 11 registered nurses from SingHealth Polyclinics.
- Pre-Course Quiz & Evaluation for the Virtual training was conducted via online platform.
- Each Case scenarios were carefully chosen to simulate the typical issues faced in the polyclinics focusing on communication tasks.
- Both the facilitators and Simulated patients (SPs) offered their feedback on ways of improvements after each role play session.
- Participants shared their learning experience at the debrief session.

Hosting & coordinating the virtual session

Participant attending didactic session virtually

Facilitator conducting session virtually

Virtual Debrief session

Virtual Role play station

Results

All participants feedback that the virtual didactic and breakout role plays were as effective as

- traditional face-to-face training.
- They felt less nervous and anxious during the virtual role-plays in comparison with face-to-face.
- Participants were able to identify SP's verbal language and non-verbal components such as tone and pitch of voice and body language.
- Having SP's feedback helped to increase participants' confidence in counseling and communication skills.
- Participants have achieved their learning objectives and recommended to continue virtual training during the pandemic.
- Online virtual training saved travelling cost and time.
- Participants found new concept of learning using the features in zoom application interesting.
- Leveraging on technology could provide education in a safe and effective environment.

Verbatim from the participants:
- *"It has achieved my learning needs and beyond"*
- *"I do not feel as nervous and anxious when attending the course via Zoom"*

Verbatim from facilitators/trainers:
- *"to nurture generations of healthcare professionals, it is important to provide continuous education even during infectious disease outbreak via innovative technology."*

Overall the course is effective

9.1%
90.9%

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Neutral
Agree
Strongly agree

My learning objectives are achieved

27.3%
72.7%

Strongly disagree
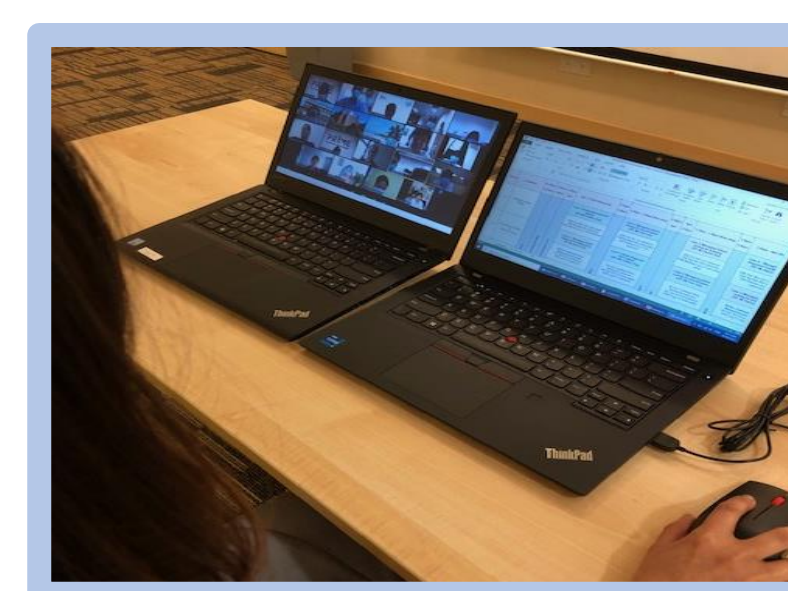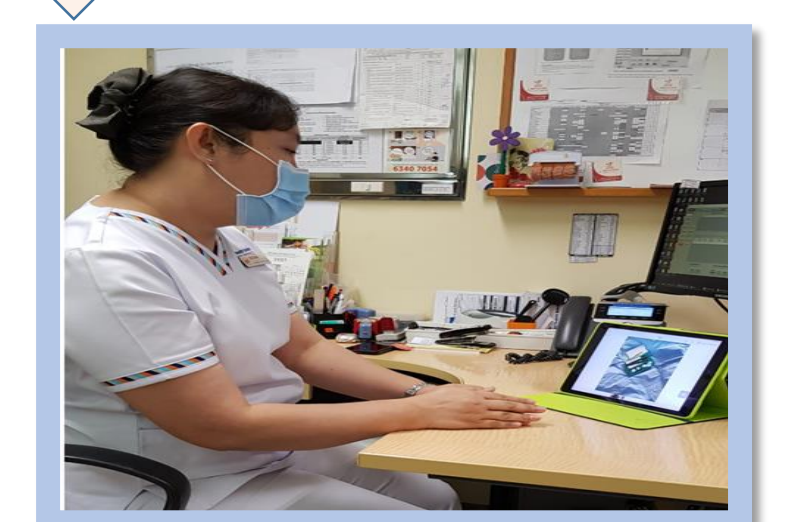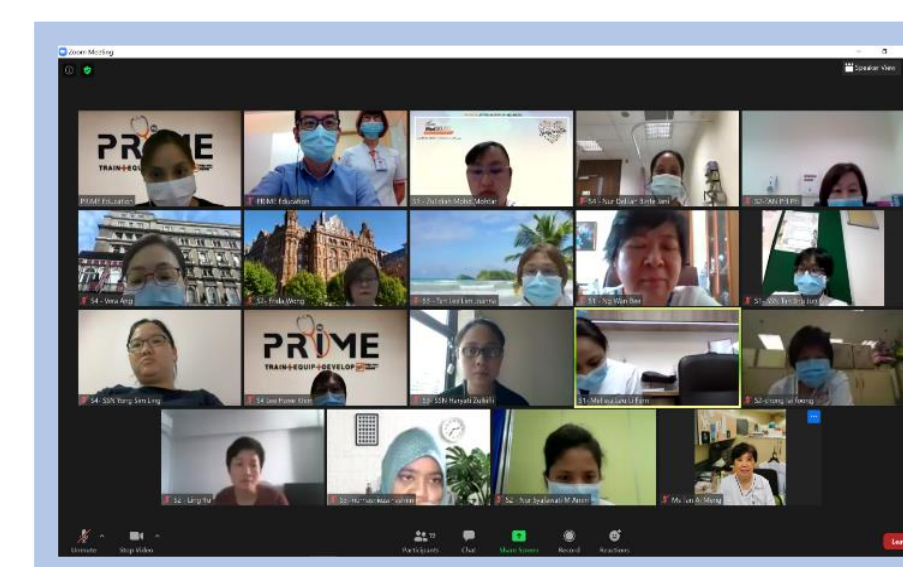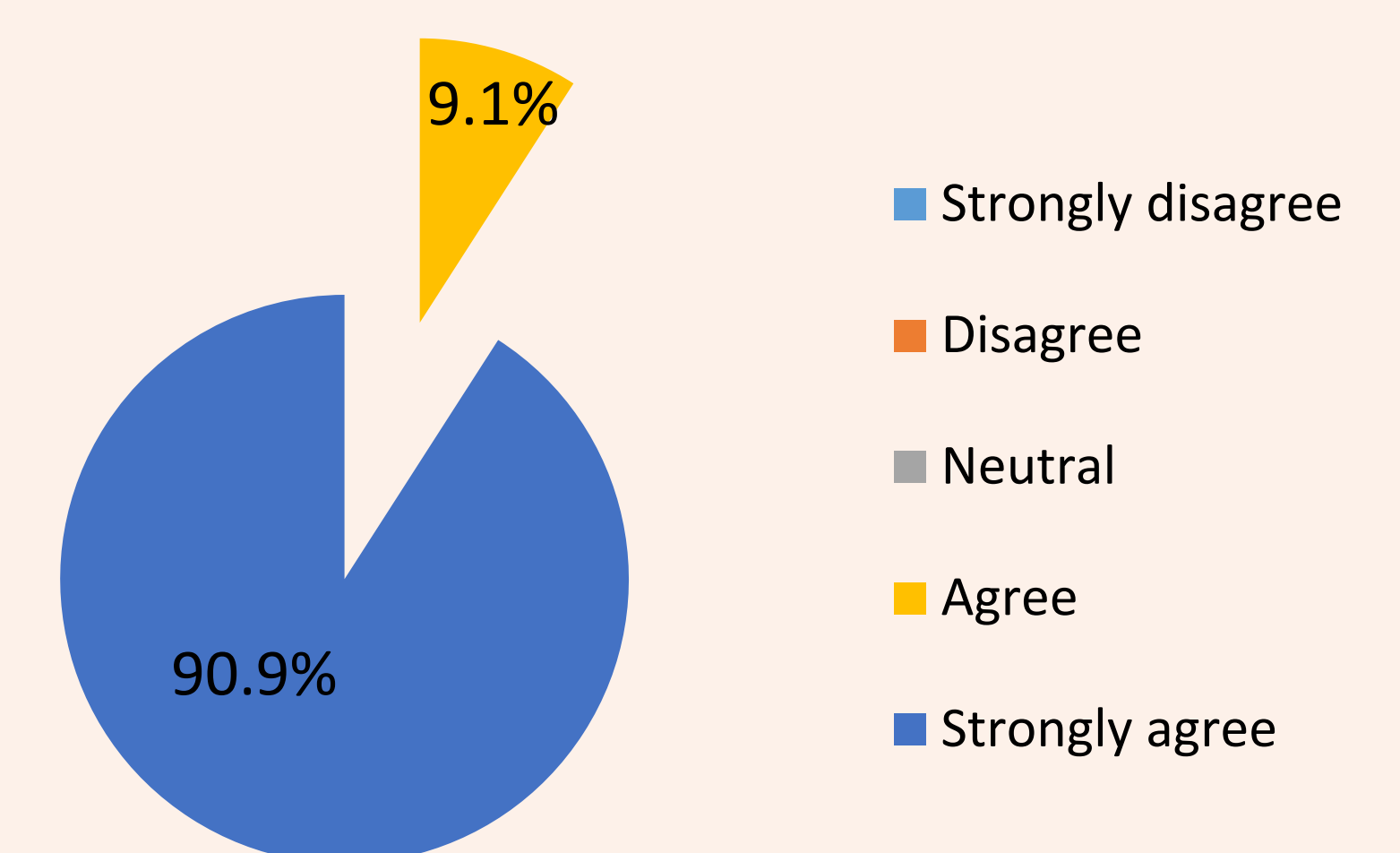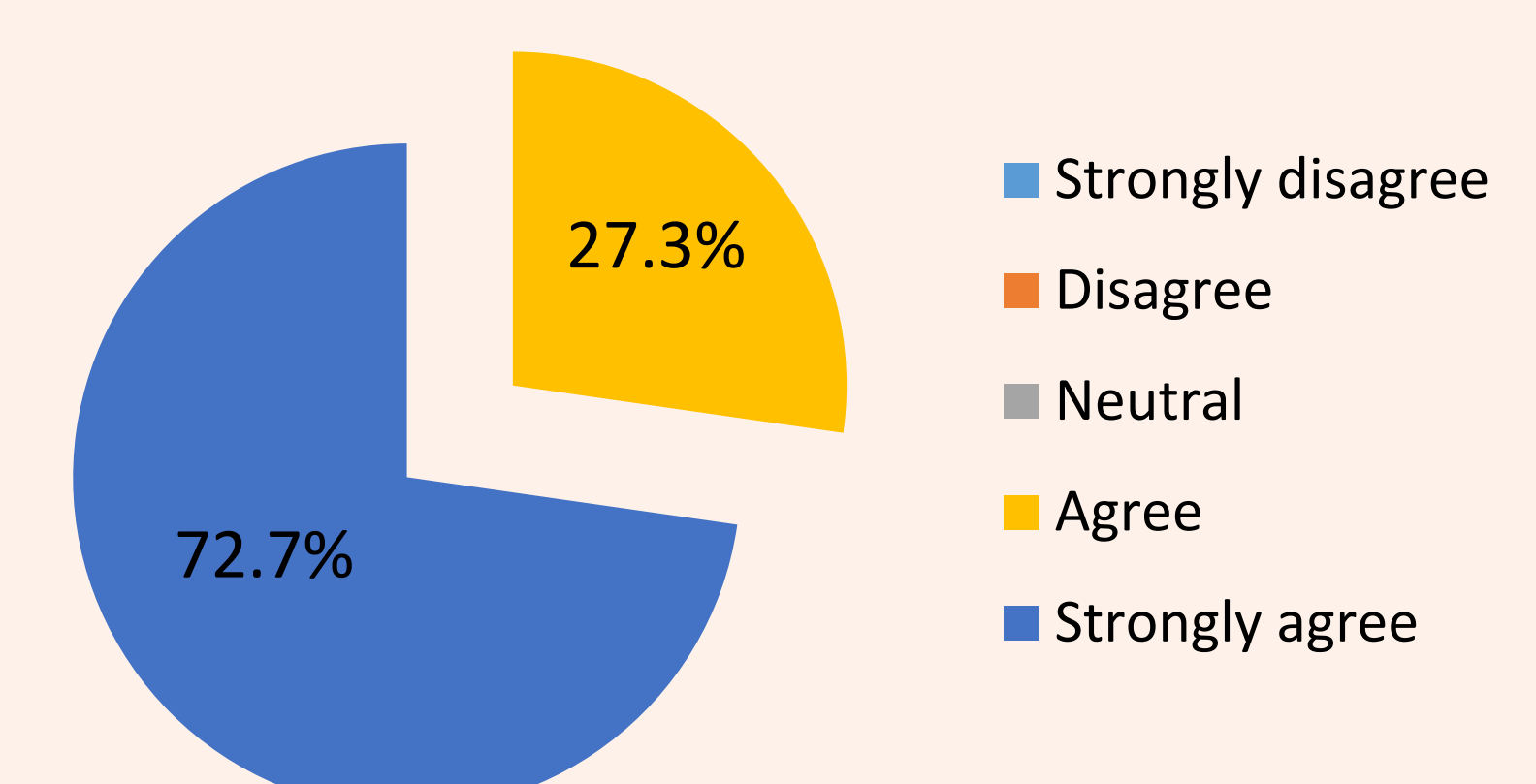Disagree
Neutral
Agree
Strongly agree

Conclusion

This Virtual Communication Skills Training opened a new innovative means of conducting training. It had achieved the aim of equipping nurses with effective communication skills in the midst of a pandemic.

Future Direction

This Virtual Training will be extended to all nurses. More scenarios will be carefully chosen to simulate the typical issues faced by nurses in the polyclinics.