

Geriatric Training Priorities and Barriers among Health Care Professionals in a Rural and Remote State

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1. INTRODUCTION

- Despite growing numbers of health care consumers aged 65 and older, the United States faces a shortage of health care providers with expertise and training in geriatric care.
- Programs such as Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Programs (GWEPs) may address gaps in geriatric health care through training and partnerships with health care professionals.
- The assessment of provider priorities, needs, and barriers comprises critical first steps in developing and implementing strategies to improve geriatric care.

2. OBJECTIVES

- To characterize geriatric health care providers, their caseloads, and training needs in a rural and remote state.
- To understand priorities among training topics and barriers to accessing formal geriatric training opportunities.

3. METHODS

Recruitment

- Participants were recruited from attendees of the 2018 Wyoming Conference on Aging who self-identified as geriatric health care providers.

Materials & Instruments

- A paper-and-pencil Needs Assessment Survey was developed by the Wyoming Center on Aging.
- Participants rated their interest in a variety of geriatric educational topics (1 = "none" to 4 = "strong") and indicated ("yes/no") whether they had encountered a list of barriers to attending geriatric trainings.

Analysis

- Analyses were conducted using SPSS version 24.
- Descriptive analyses were used to characterize participants, geriatric caseload, current formal training, areas of need, and barriers to accessing formal training in geriatrics.

Figure 1. Interest in Geriatric Education Topics

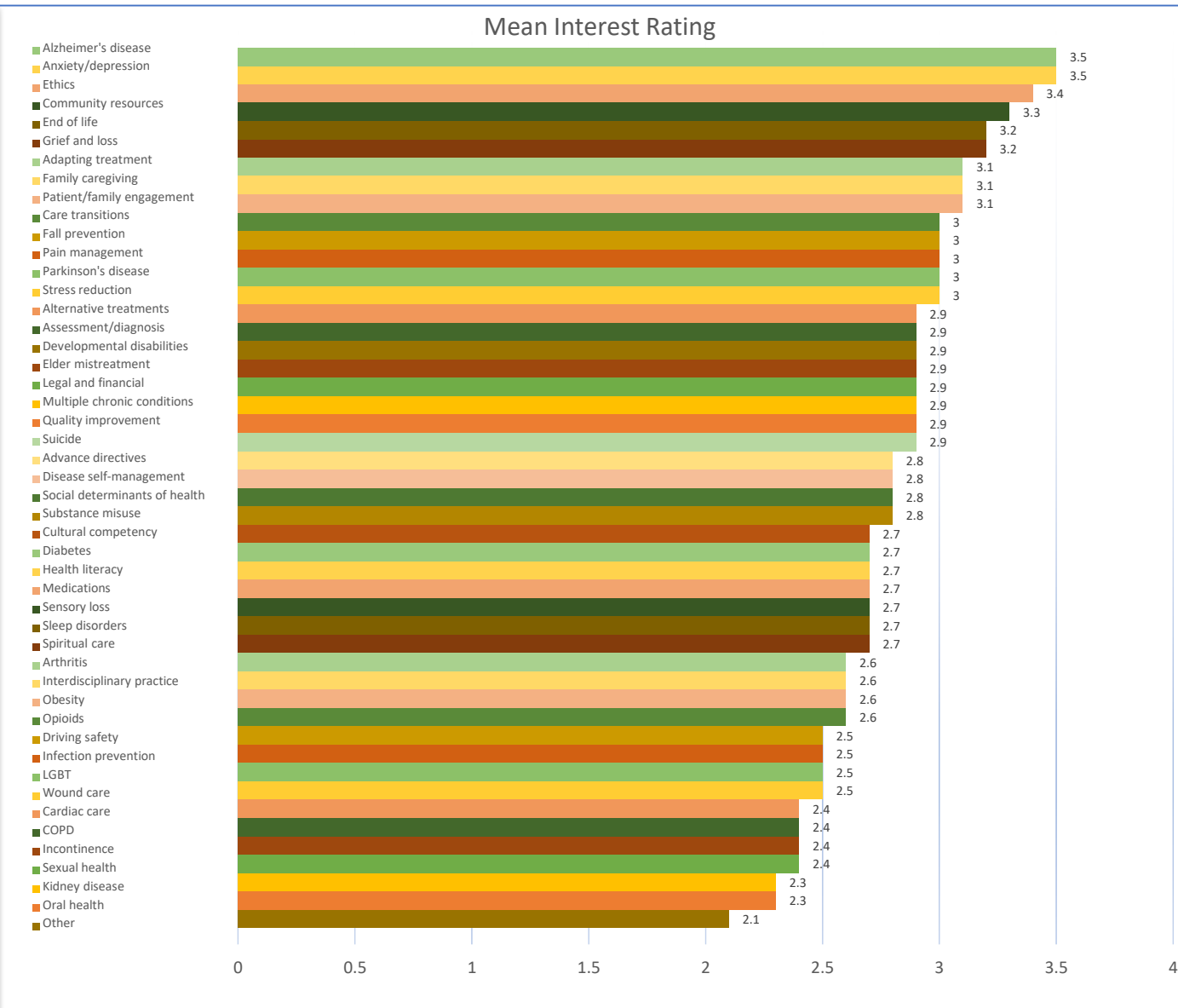
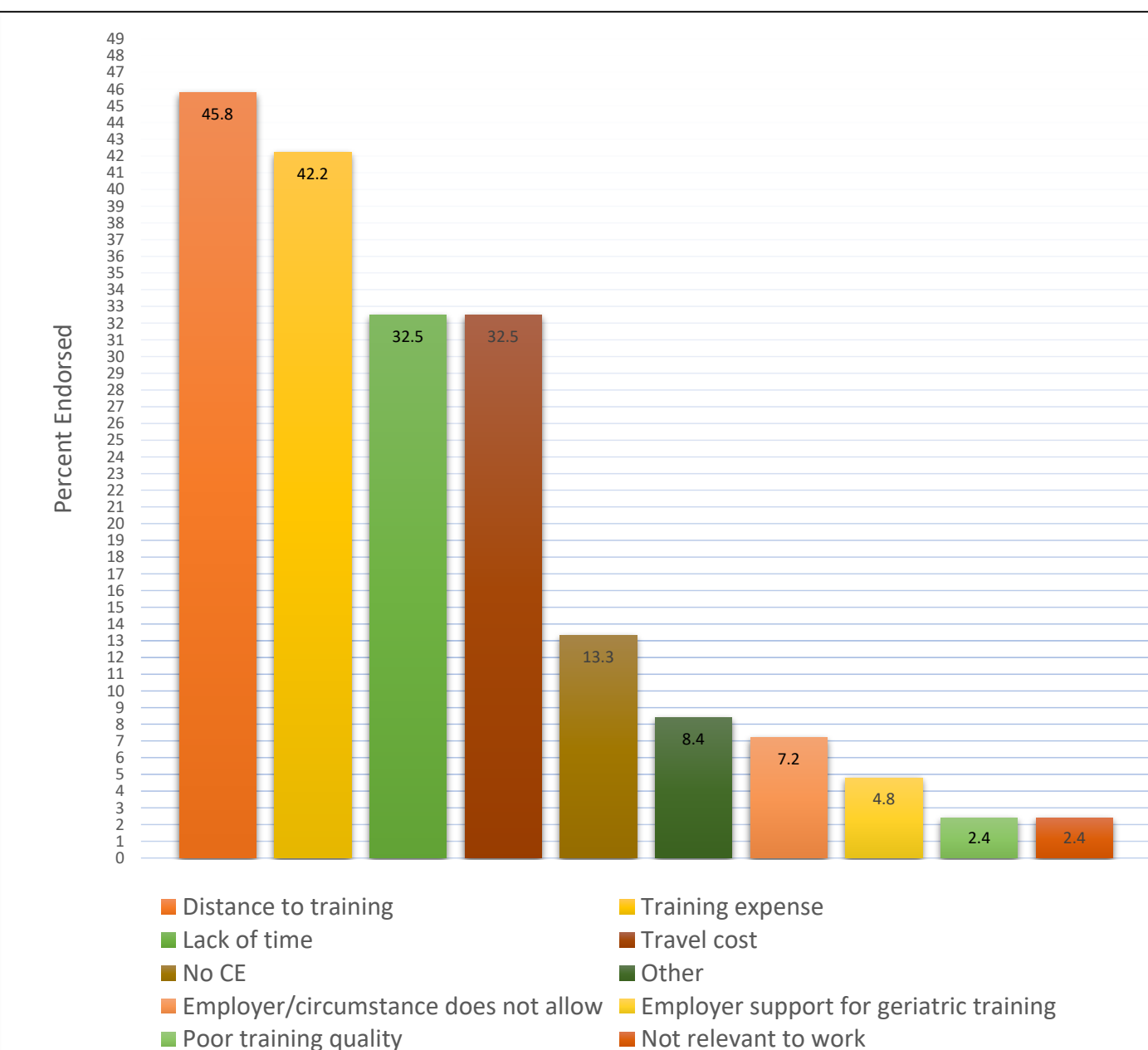


Figure 2. Barriers to Accessing Geriatric Training



4. RESULTS

Participant Characteristics

- Self-identified health care providers ($n = 83$) represented multiple counties in Wyoming.
- A majority held Baccalaureate ($n = 36, 43.4%$) or Master's ($n = 22, 26.5%$) degrees.
- Participants largely represented nursing ($n = 24, 28.9%$) and mental health ($n = 17, 20.5%$) disciplines, most frequently in a primary care setting ($n = 25, 30.1%$).
- Most participants ($n = 60, 72.3%$) characterized 75-100% of their patients as aged 65 or older.

Geriatric Training

- Less than half ($n = 33, 39.8%$) had received formal training (e.g., fellowship) in geriatrics.
- Nearly half ($n = 38, 45.8%$) had received some support or training from the Wyoming GWEF.
- Participants rated their interest in a variety of geriatric training topics. Alzheimer's disease, anxiety and depression, and ethics emerged as areas of highest interest (see Figure 1).
- Most frequently endorsed barriers to accessing geriatric training included distance, travel expense, cost of training, and time constraints (see Figure 2).

5. CONCLUSIONS

- Results of this needs assessment are consistent with national trends in which professionals with little formal training in geriatrics provide services to growing numbers of older adult patients.
- These results underscore the need for continued support of programs that facilitate geriatric trainings, such as GWEPs, as well as innovative training opportunities and delivery methods.
- This sample represents a unique population of providers who attended a conference, despite the barriers to accessing such trainings. Future research could examine facilitators to attending conferences and similar training opportunities.