



Clinical Spanish Proficiency Among Internal Medicine Residents: Identifying Educational Needs



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Aim:

Describe the Spanish language communication needs of patients, ascertain the Spanish language proficiency of their resident providers, and characterize the landscape of current language communication practices.

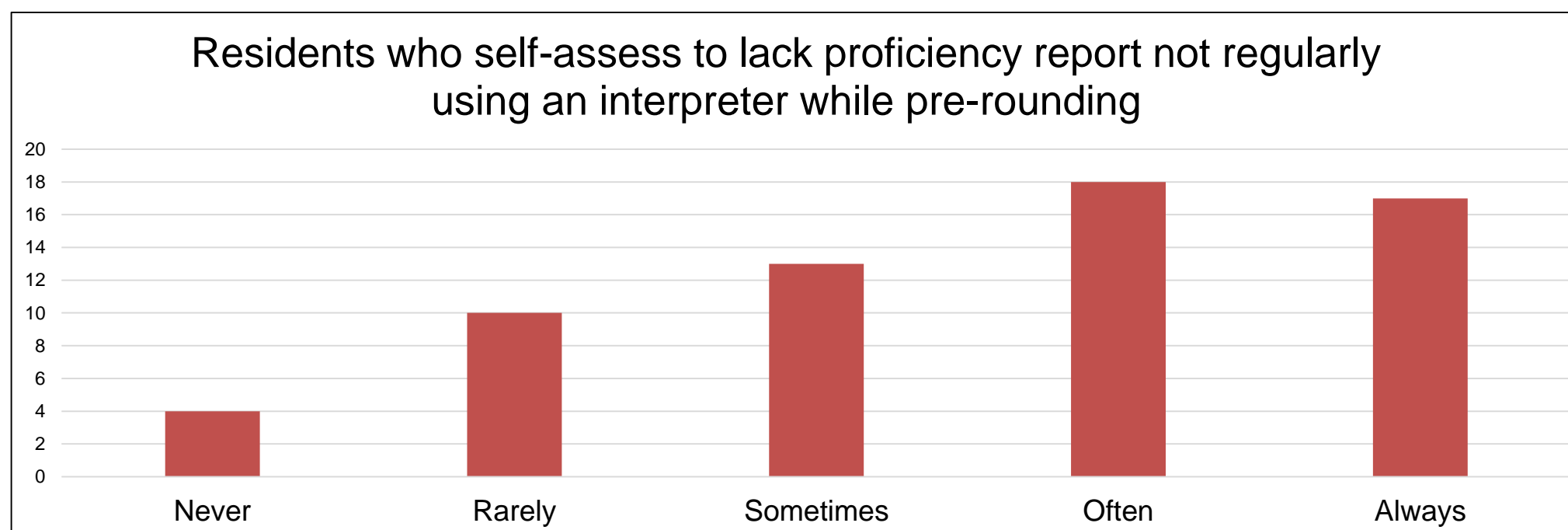
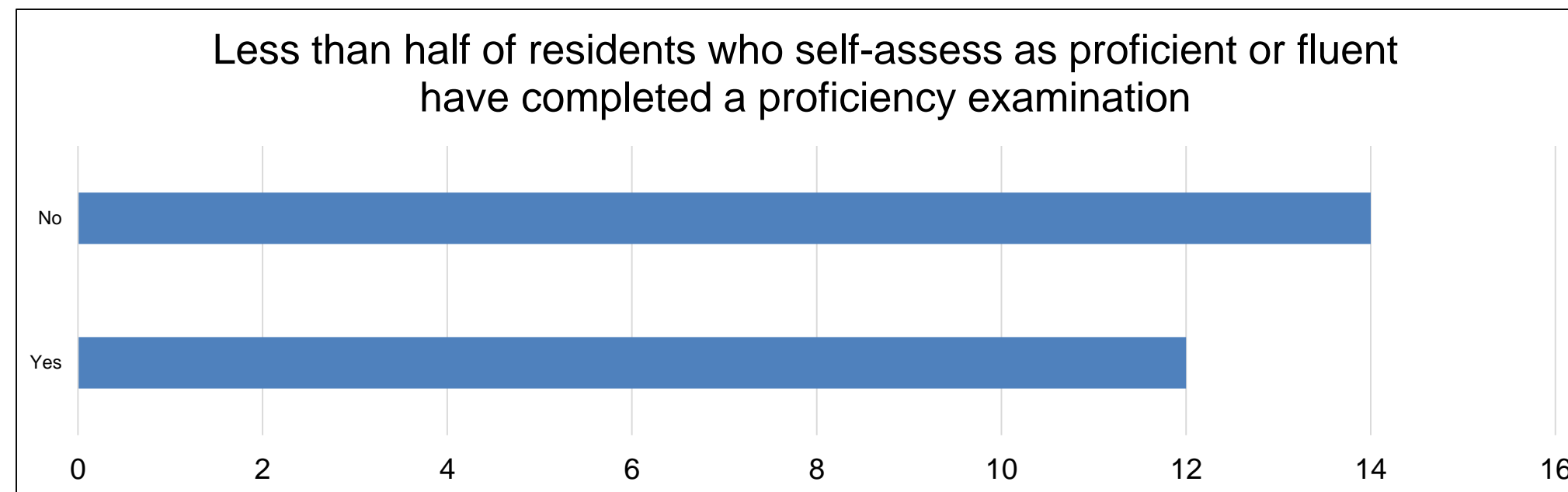
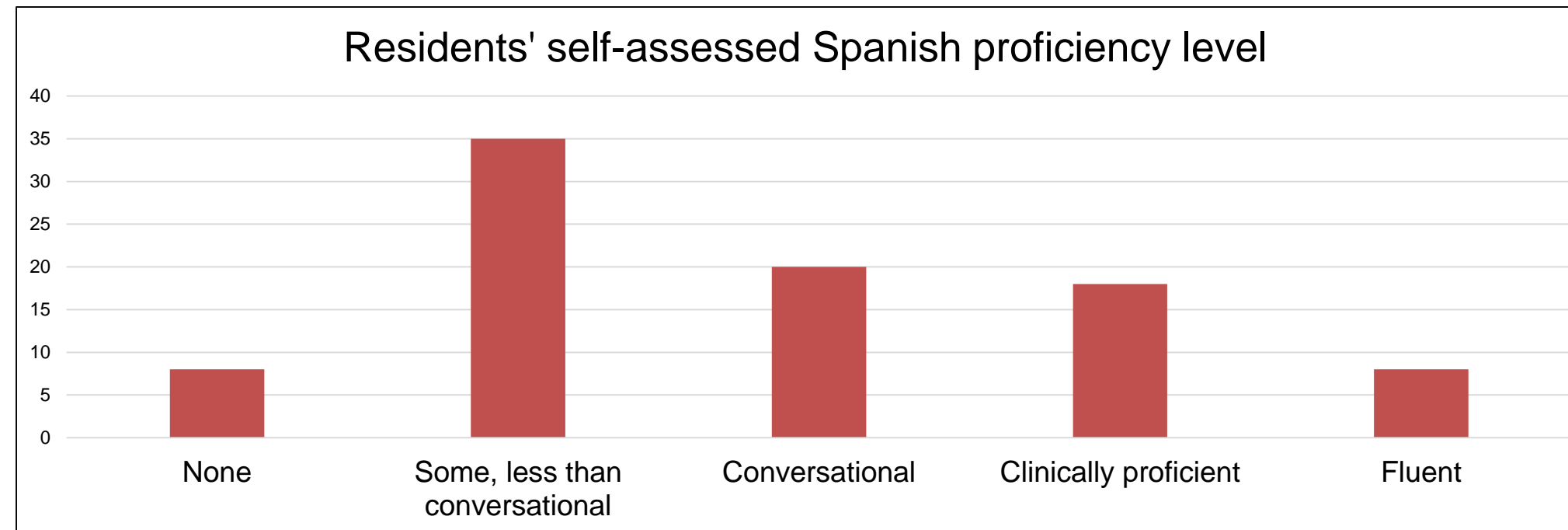
Introduction

- As the population of Spanish-speaking patients continues to grow in the US, ongoing work is needed to address the linguistic barriers that contribute to disparities in healthcare.
- Language concordance between patients and providers associates with increased patient satisfaction and understanding of their care; therefore, more Spanish-speaking physicians are needed to bridge this communication gap.
- As language acquisition occurs longitudinally, residency training affords a unique opportunity for structured education to advance language skills.
- Limited data exist on Spanish language skills and acquisition amongst residents and whether resident providers adhere to best language communication practices.

Methods

- We distributed an electronic survey to 167 Internal Medicine and 16 Medicine/Pediatrics residents.
- We queried the electronic medical record and reviewed institutional demographic data to categorize patients' primary language spoken at our major clinical training sites.
- Descriptive statistics performed using Microsoft Excel.
- This study qualified as exempt from IRB review.

Results



1% - 33% Of patients at our primary teaching sites (varies by hospital and clinic) report Spanish as their primary language

84% Of residents report prior Spanish language training

89% Of residents report interest in learning further clinical Spanish during residency training

Narrative analysis: barriers to achieving proficiency

- “There will always be cultural nuances lost, that only time and practice and exposure will help with”
- “Consistent use/practice opportunities.”
- “Feeling like the practice I need to improve gives my patients substandard care”
- “Not having any immersive experience that forced me to use Spanish regularly hence losing a lot of vocabulary and grammar skills”

Discussion

- Although many residents report prior Spanish language training, few assess they have achieved clinical proficiency or fluency.
- Despite this, residents with inadequate language proficiency communicate without the use of a professional interpreter.
- For those who do self-assess as proficient, only half have completed a hospital required proficiency exam.
- More robust opportunities for Spanish language education, proficiency assessment, and education on appropriate use of medical interpreters are needed

