



How do we know we make a difference? Evaluation of the nurses[HUB]

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Introduction

Nurses are the largest group in the health workforce and provide most of the direct patient and family care. CareSearch launched a nurses[HUB] in August 2010 to support nurses providing palliative care in any setting.

Anecdotal evidence and website statistics indicated use and uptake of the information in the nurses[HUB]. However, in order to look formally at the impact and effectiveness of the nurses[HUB], an evaluation strategy was developed in conjunction with an external evaluation partner, the Centre for Health Services Development at University of Wollongong. [1] This was implemented seven months following the launch.

Method

The evaluation methodology was broken down into two major components. Firstly, those registered to receive CareSearch newsletters were invited to participate in an on-line survey. Secondly, a telephone interview was conducted with key nursing stakeholders.

Online survey

The online survey was developed to address issues of awareness, ease of navigation, sections visited, information used to change practice and suggestions for improvement.

The survey and method of administration was piloted online with members of the nurses[HUB]news advisory group. Ethics approval was received for the online survey and for subsequent stakeholder interviews from the HREC at University of Wollongong.

Around 2,500 individuals received information on the online study. A total of 233 responses were subsequently received. The survey was 'live' between 31 January 2011 and 21 February 2011.

Telephone interviews

Ten questions were used in semi-structured telephone interviews with ten key personnel based on their policy, educational or leadership roles in nursing. The aim was to discuss how the nurses[HUB] could best support nurses' information needs and to gain further insight into how the resource could be improved.

Results

Two hundred thirty three respondents accepted an invitation to complete the online survey, and of those, 68% had heard of the nurses[HUB].

Of those who used the nurses[HUB], 25 respondents (or 30% of this group) had used information to make changes to palliative care practice within their service.

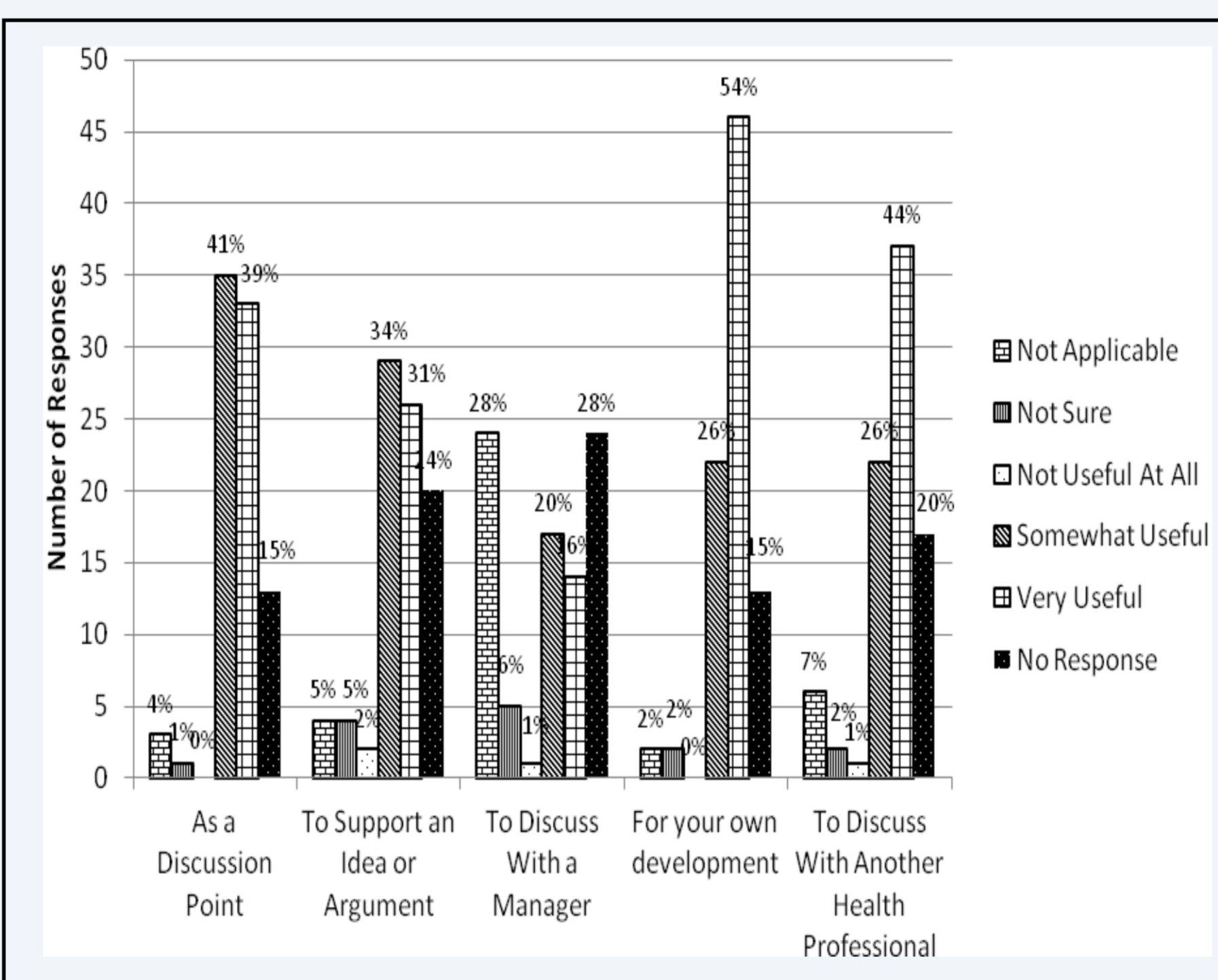


Table 1 (above) shows that 80% (n=68) of those who responded found the information 'For your own development' very or somewhat useful, and those who responded 80% (n=72) found the information 'As a discussion point' very or somewhat useful.

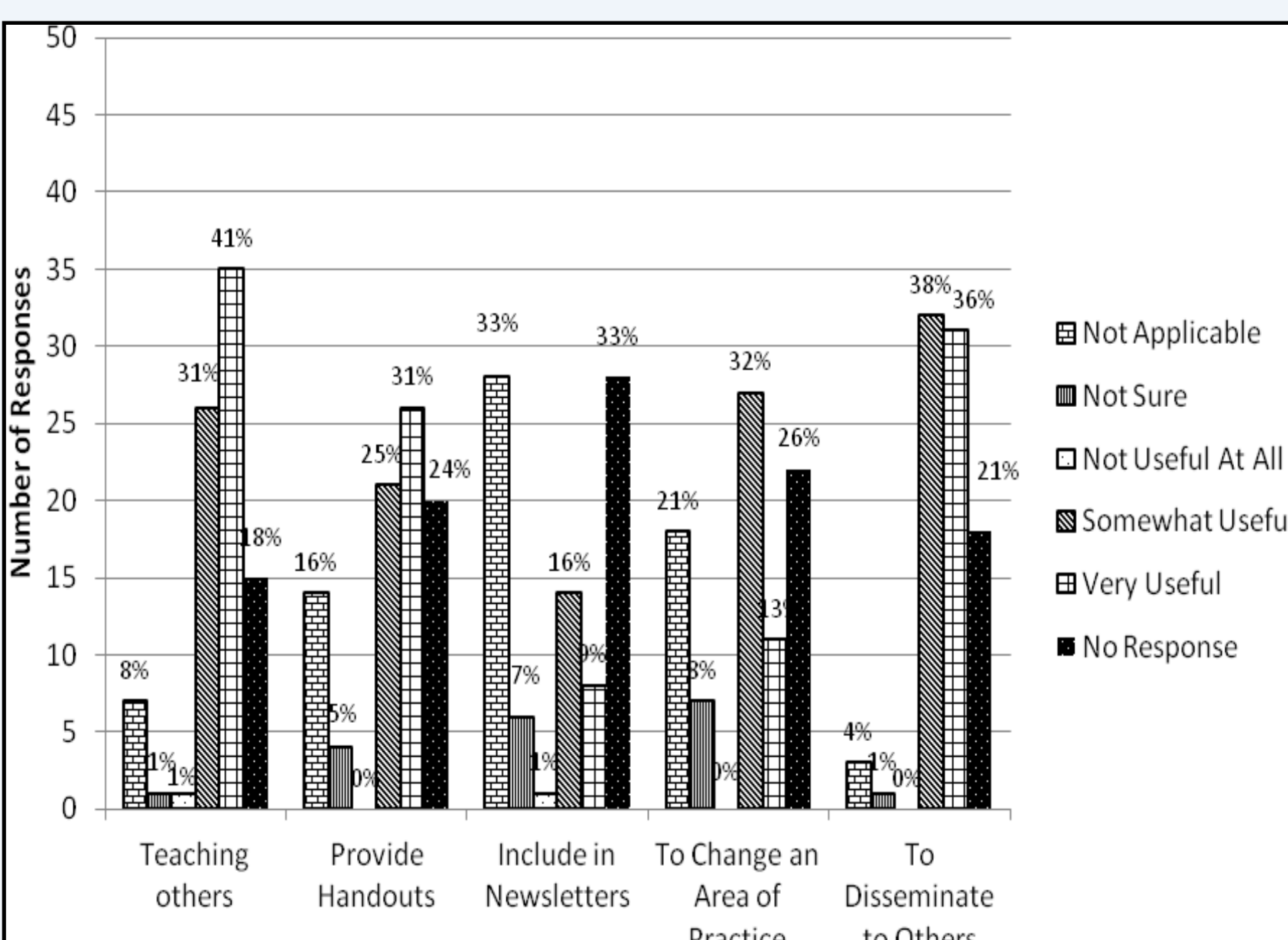


Table 2 (above) shows that 74% also found the information useful or very useful to 'Disseminate to others', and 72% found the information useful or very useful to 'Teach others'.

In the interviews, all respondents felt the nurses[HUB] was a useful direction for CareSearch, as quoted here:

"The nurses[HUB] has been an excellent step forward, especially as end-of-life care has been more medicalised and specialised. It addresses issues that nurses face on a daily basis. [It is] a major resource for palliative care."

"[The nurses[HUB] is] current, always evidence-based. It is usable information and the links are relevant. I recommend and promote the site."

Findings

The on-line survey and stakeholder interviews provided a range of suggestions in relation to the ongoing development of the nurses[HUB], including:

- that the nurses[HUB] has a key role to play in educating the nursing workforce on end-of-life matters
- that there is a need to teach nurses how to use the CareSearch website and how to use information technology more broadly
- that there is a need to teach nurses how to search or 'sift' through the evidence and how to interpret and use the evidence
- that the nurses[HUB] could be a driver of change by continuing to provide nurses with access to useable information at the point of care
- that the spread of knowledge and awareness of the nurses[HUB] will affect its impact on improvements in end of life care, with marketing a key issue

However, there was also recognition that:

- there are technological and organisational /workforce barriers that negatively affect nurses' ability to use online resources
- Nursing culture can act as a barrier to nurses accessing information



Conclusion

Ongoing routine data collection such as pages visited and resources downloaded addresses questions such as page popularity.

However, formal evaluation adds to the picture, with information sourced on what is useful to improve practice, how nurses use the hub with perceived barriers to use, and feedback on usefulness of the resource that allow further development, promotion and potential areas for improvement.

This evaluation has found strong evidence to support the value of the nurses[HUB] as an effective mechanism for translating evidence into practice.

Reference

[1] Fildes D, Samsa P and Steele P (2011) *Evaluation of the CareSearch Nurses Hub: Results of an on-line survey and telephone interviews*. Centre for Health Service Development, University of Wollongong.