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Oral Wellness: Using Occupational Therapy to Enhance Oral Hygiene Delivery in Long-Term Care

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OT and Oral Care in Long Term Care

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Introduction

- Oral Health in long-term care (LTC) facilities is frequently of low priority and most LTC facilities do not follow evidence-based best practices.
- Poor oral health leads to secondary systemic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, stroke, malnutrition, and most commonly-pneumonia. Pneumonia is the number one leading cause of death in LTC facilities.
- 70-90 % of residents in LTC facilities require assistance with activities of daily living, which includes brushing teeth/dentures.

Objectives

- The project team investigated the effects of an oral care in-service provided to LTC staff.
- The in-service covered best practices of oral care, strategies, and adaptive equipment to facilitate oral care delivery to residents.

Literature Review

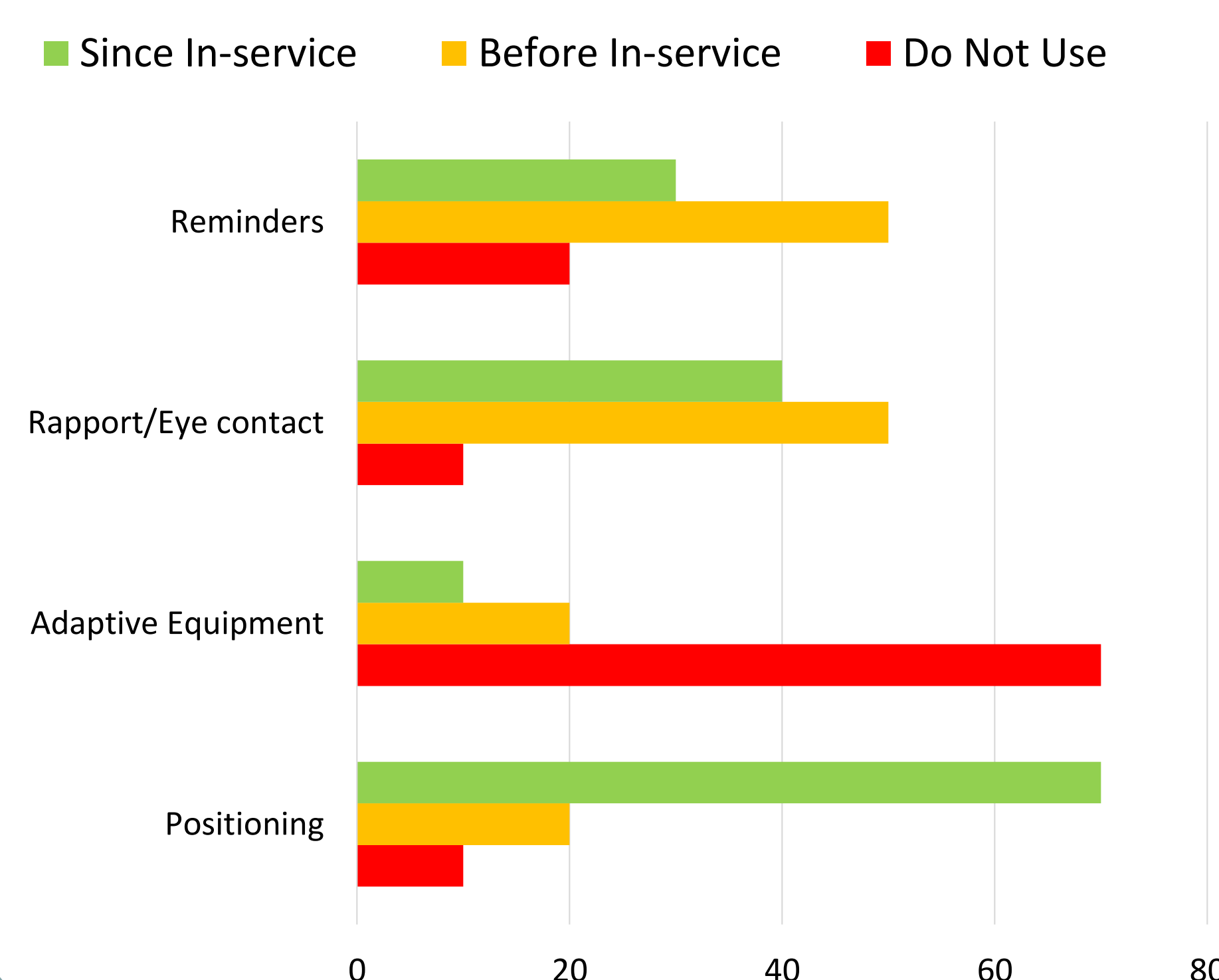
- Current oral care practice
- Consequences of poor oral care
- Evidence-based guidelines
- Barriers to providing proper oral care
- Role of occupational therapist

Project Implementation

1. Needs assessment survey
 - Informed students of the content needed for in-service
2. In-service
 - Importance of oral hygiene
 - Evidence based best practice
 - Strategies and adaptations to facilitate oral care
3. Ten day follow-up survey
4. Five month follow-up survey



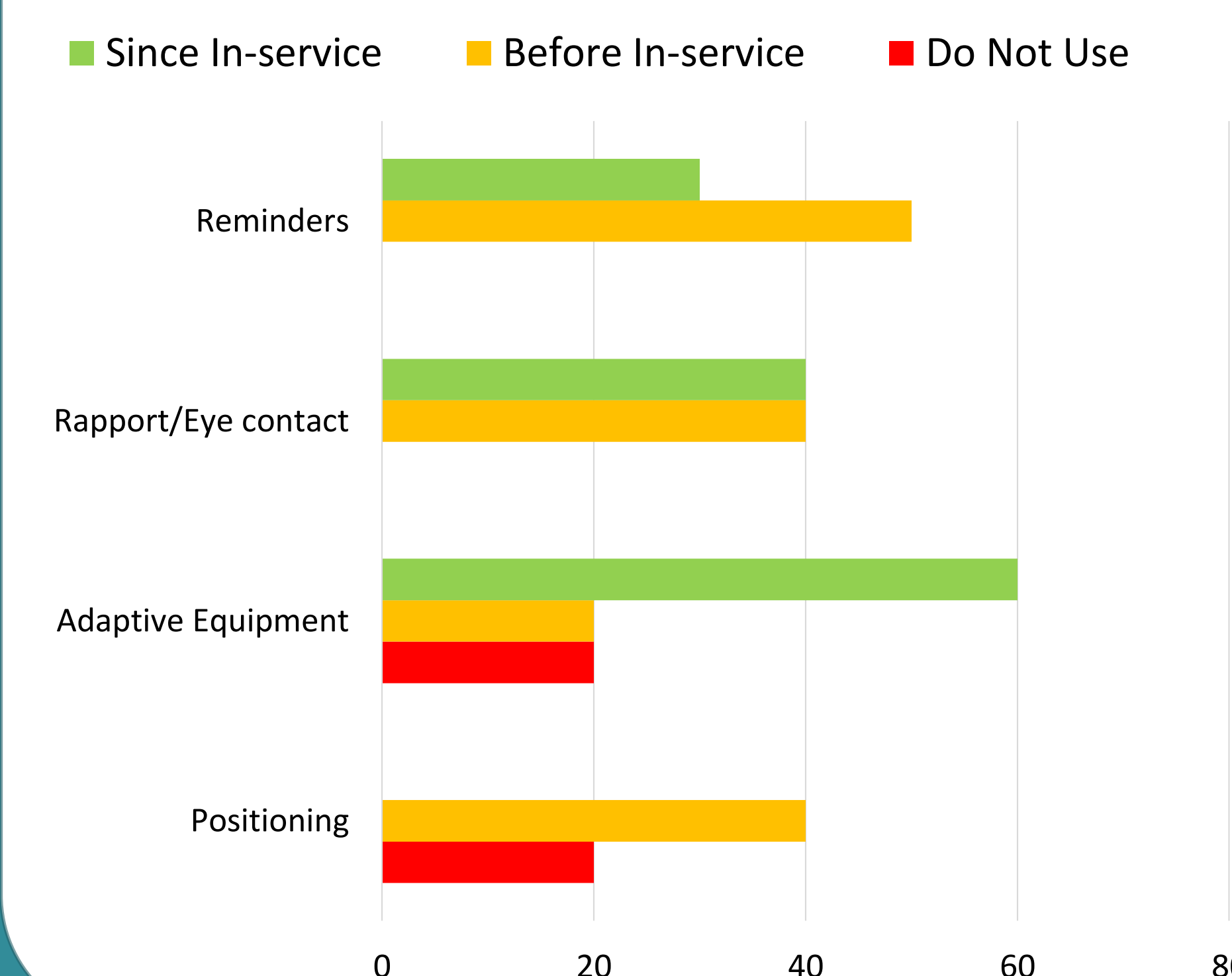
Post-Survey 10 days after In-Service



Results

- All participants agreed the in-service improved their understanding of the importance of oral health.
- All oral care strategies were adapted at some level. However, the retention and degree varied depending on each individual participant.
- Specialized knowledge of OT (adaptive equipment/positioning) contributed to the interdisciplinary team of nursing and OT.
- Inconsistent adaptation of new strategies in conjunction with participant's desire for additional in-services indicated need for continued, repeated in-service provisions.

Post-Survey 5 months after In-Service



Conclusion

The educational in-service benefited the LTC staff by educating, demonstrating, and increasing awareness about the importance of proper oral care and by providing strategies for improved oral care delivery.

Clinical Implication

Occupational therapists can and should use their specialized skills and knowledge as educators, resource guides, and consultants to improve the quality of oral health in LTC facilities.

References

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