
Addressing Asthma Cost Concerns in Pediatric Specialty Care: Feasibility of a Communication Training Intervention

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Disclosures

- I have no conflicts to declare.

Background and objective

Defining asthma care costs

Direct costs

Medications
Office visits
Equipment

Defining asthma care costs

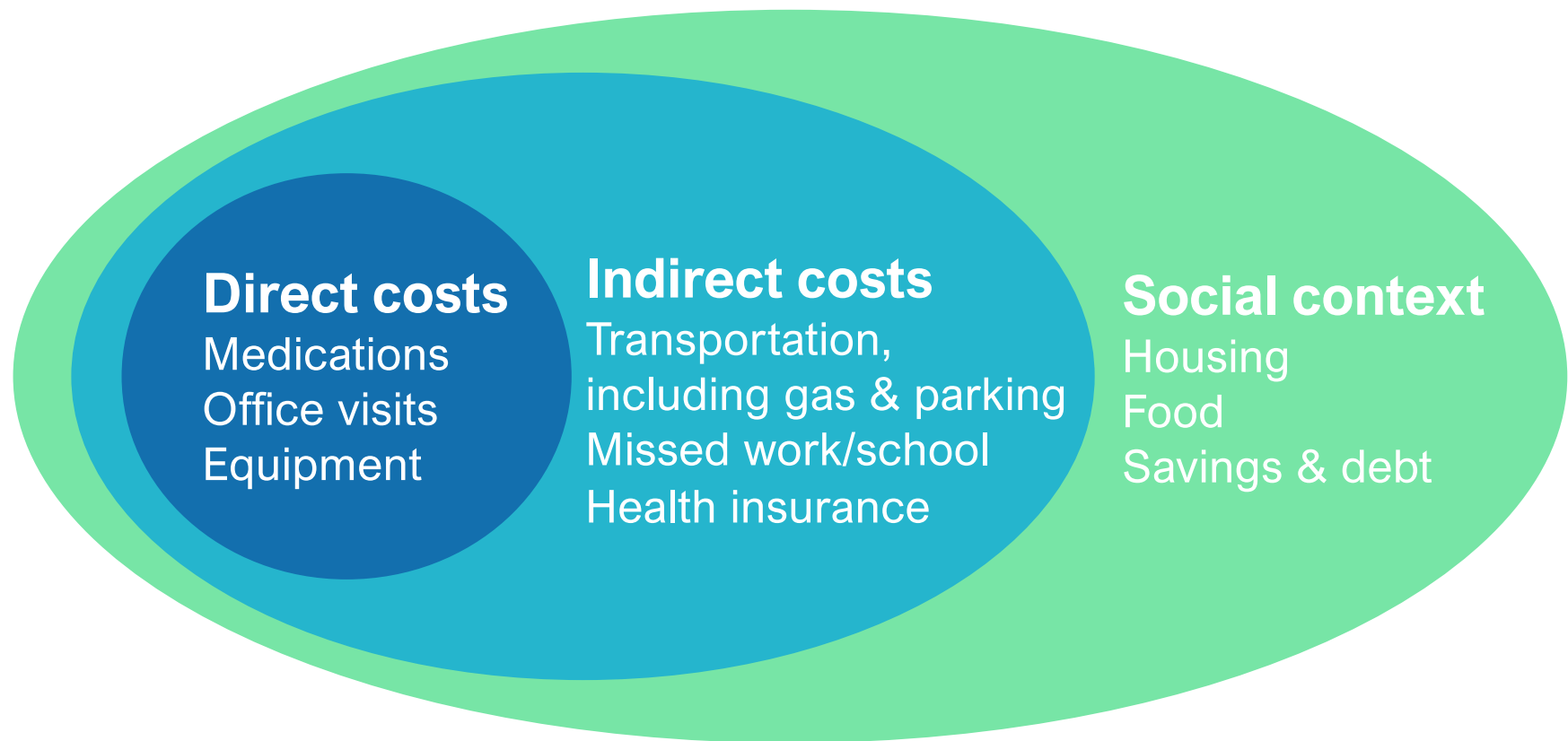
Direct costs

Medications
Office visits
Equipment

Indirect costs

Transportation,
including gas & parking
Missed work/school
Health insurance

Defining asthma care costs





Impact on pediatric patients

- Asthma care is expensive, with total costs averaging \$3,266 per person per year
- Rising asthma costs are a key barrier to adequate care for pediatric patients
- High costs may decrease medication adherence, lead to delayed or forgone care, and cause families to make other financial tradeoffs



Need for communication training

- Asthma specialty care teams are well-positioned to help patients and their families address cost
- Discussing cost can be uncomfortable and logistically challenging
- A communication training may increase awareness of high asthma costs and provide tools to discuss cost with families



Study objective

To evaluate the feasibility of a brief communication training for asthma specialty care teams to facilitate cost conversations with families.

Methods



Participants and procedures

- We conducted a 1-hour interactive, web-based training in 2021
- Attendees were providers and nurses (n=14) at a high-volume pediatric asthma specialty clinic in NC
- Participants completed online surveys immediately pre- and post-training



Communication training intervention

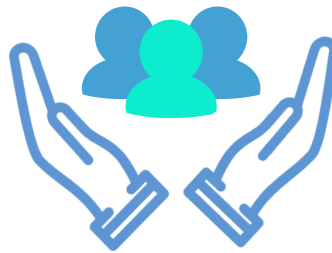
Training included:

- Data on asthma care costs and the need for cost conversations
- Instruction in the “4Rs,” a structured communication approach for discussing cost with families

The “4Rs” guides providers to:



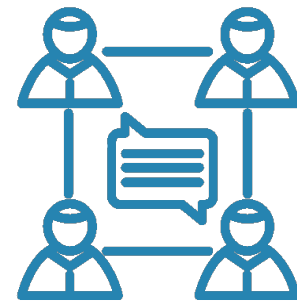
Raise the Topic



Reassure



Revise Care Plan



Refer

Raise the topic

- Ask parents about costs **routinely**, not just when they are openly struggling
- Let them know cost concerns are **common**



(Fox et al, 2018)

Raise the topic

Example:

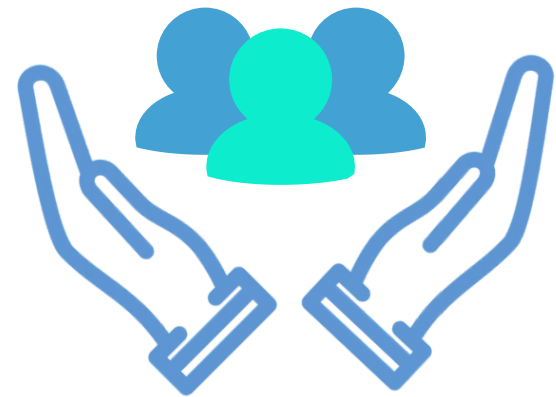
“Asthma medications can be really expensive, so I always like to check in about costs. What have you been paying for asthma meds? How reasonable are those costs for your family?”



Reassure

Tell families that cost concerns:

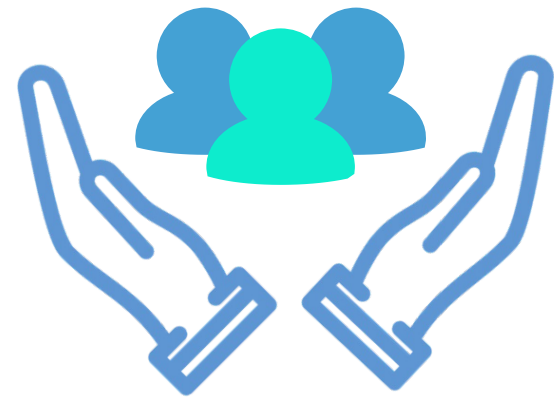
- Are something you want to talk about
- Will not impact care quality
- Can often be addressed



Reassure

Example:

“I’m glad you told me this. It’s common for families to face unexpected costs when their insurance plans change. Our team has a lot of experience working with families to make good care more affordable. We can almost always find a way to help.”



Revise care plan

Look for ways to safely reduce costs:

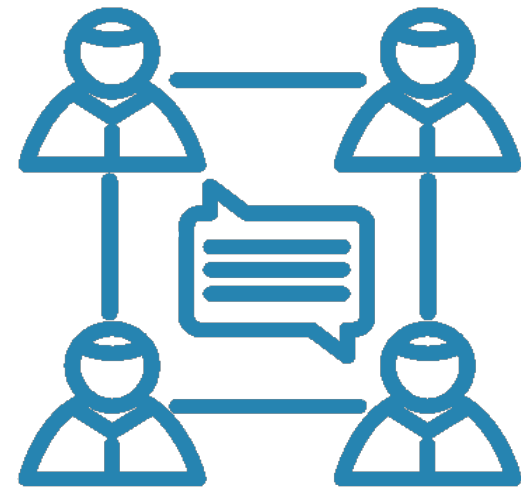
- Switch to lower-cost meds in the same class
- Prescribe generics (e.g., albuterol)
- Reduce test frequency (e.g., lung function tests)
- Offer telehealth visits



Refer

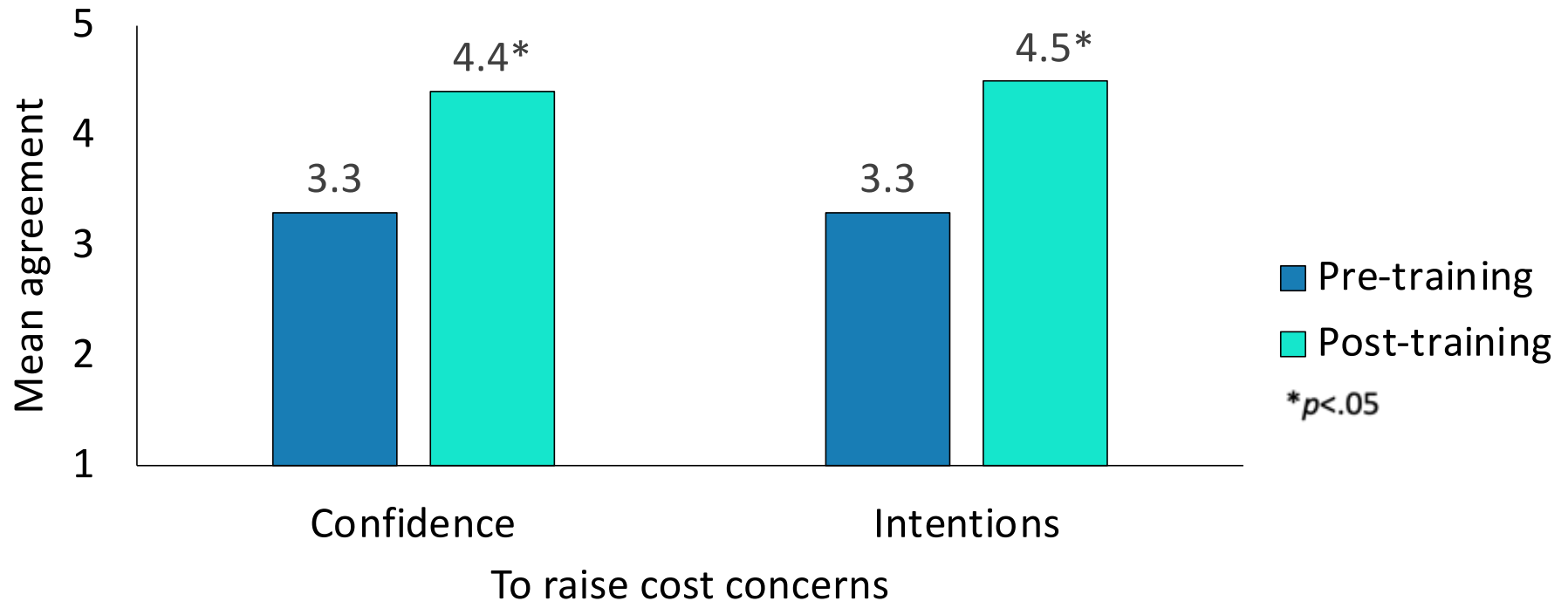
Use a team-based approach:

- Asthma educator
- Social worker
- Financial counselors
- Pharmacists
- Primary care providers



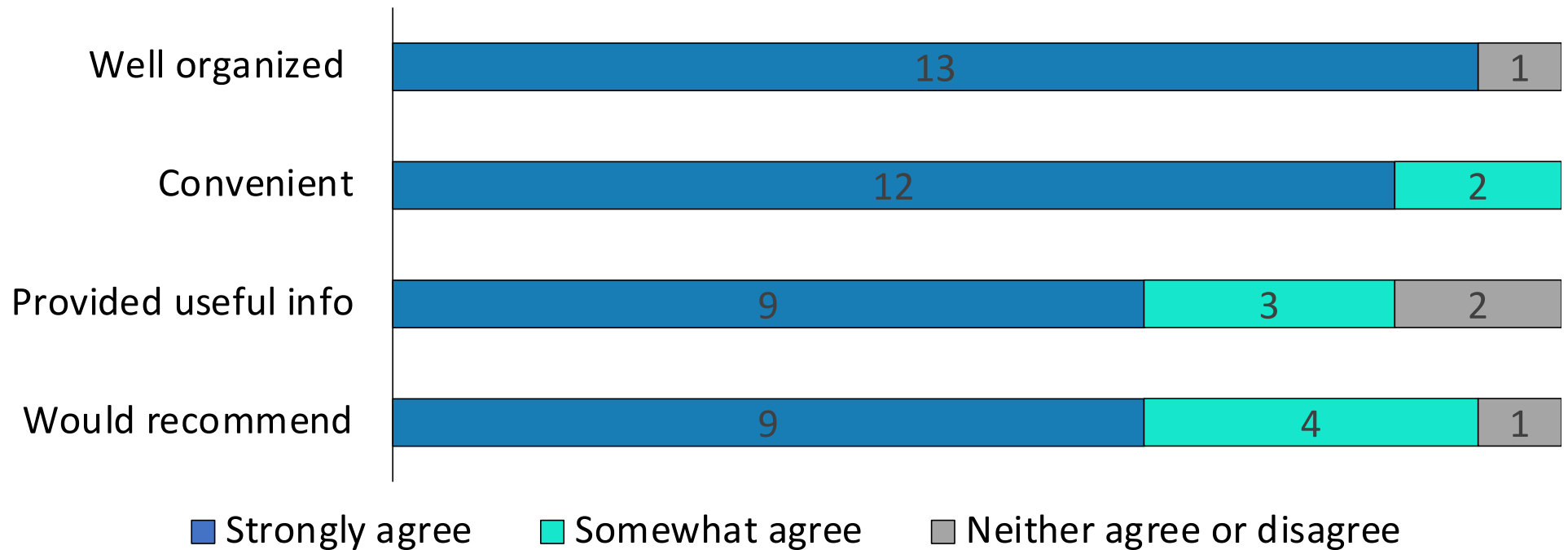
Results

Confidence and intentions to discuss cost ($n = 14$)



Training feasibility and acceptability ($n = 14$)

Number of participants who agreed the training was:



Discussion



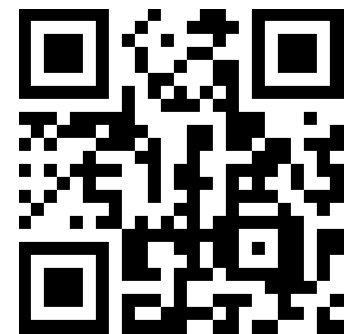
Summary and next steps

- Findings suggest that communication training to address asthma cost concerns is feasible and increased the care team's confidence and intentions to discuss cost
- Asthma educators can play a role in delivering trainings to make cost conversations a routine part of asthma care

Additional resources



Please scan the QR code to watch our video and share with families at your own clinic





Thank you!

Collaborators

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