

INTRODUCTION

Barriers to care are faced by many Americans. These barriers can come in the form of financial constraints, geographic distances, or maximal education levels. These barriers can often result in adverse patient outcomes. A 2009 study revealed that patients with barriers to care were 14% more likely to have an ED visit when compared to patients with no barriers to care.¹ A means to remove these barriers to care towards care for all is Telemedicine. Telemedicine can not only bring high quality care to patients in their houses² but increase their competency with their disease.³

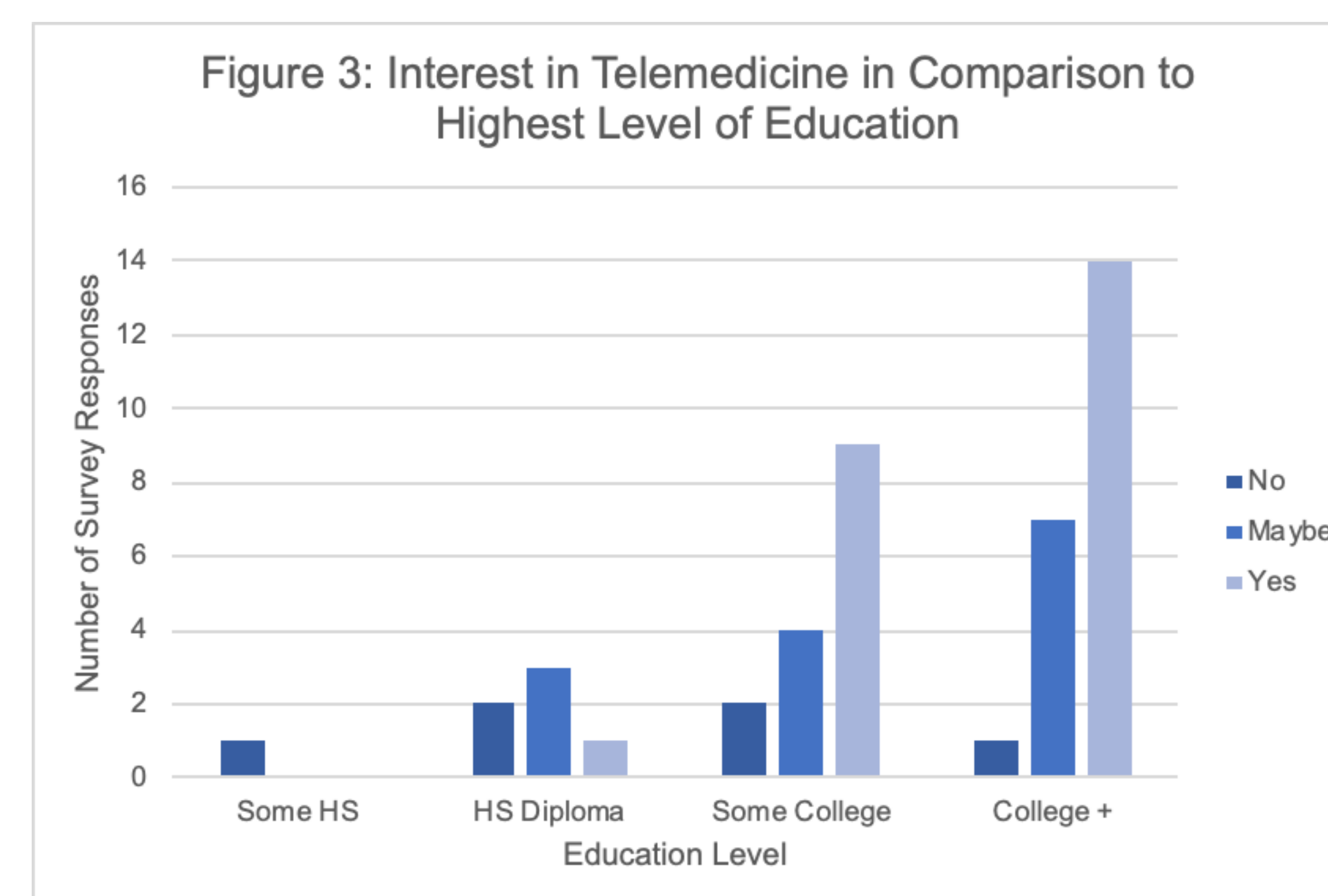
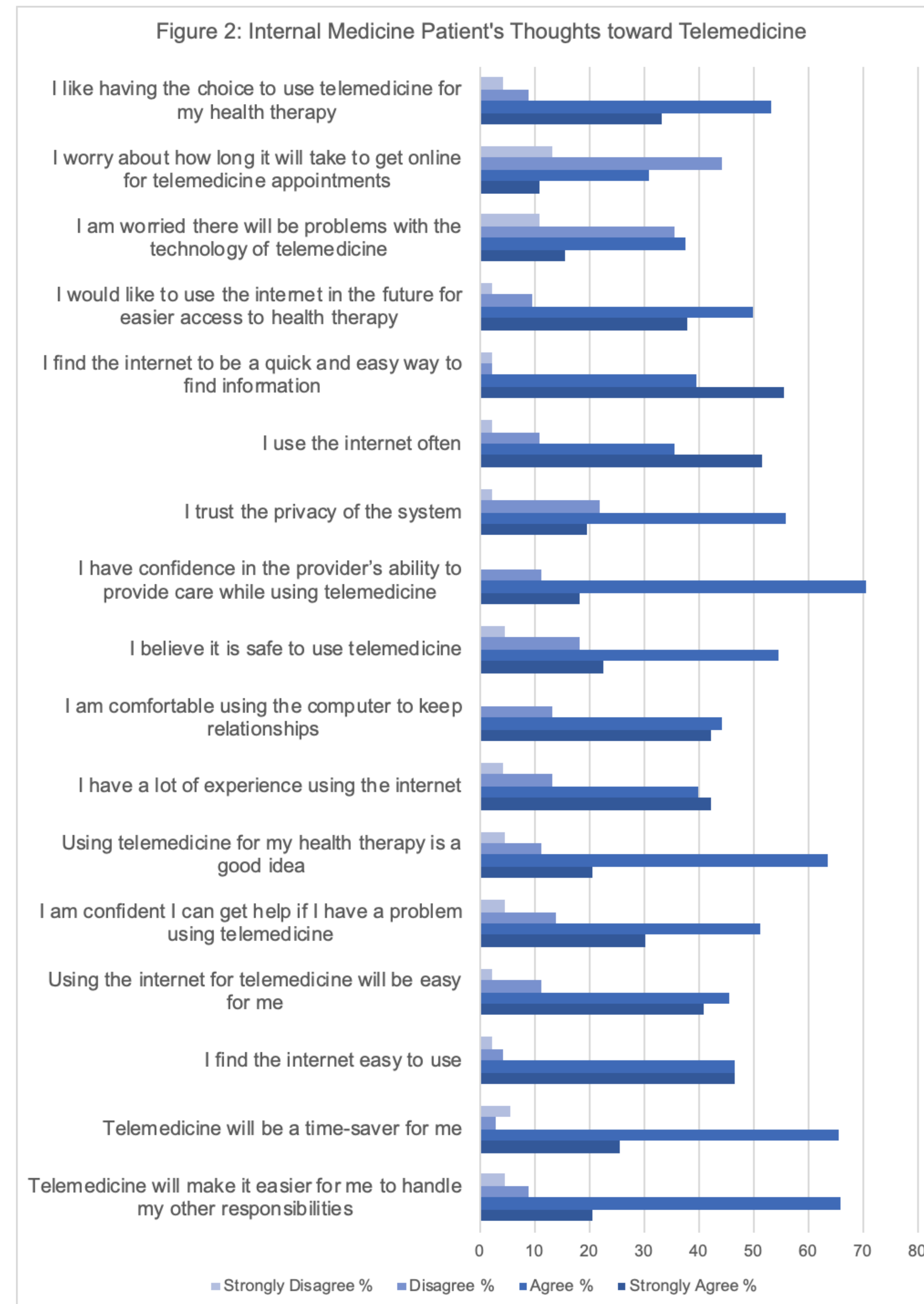
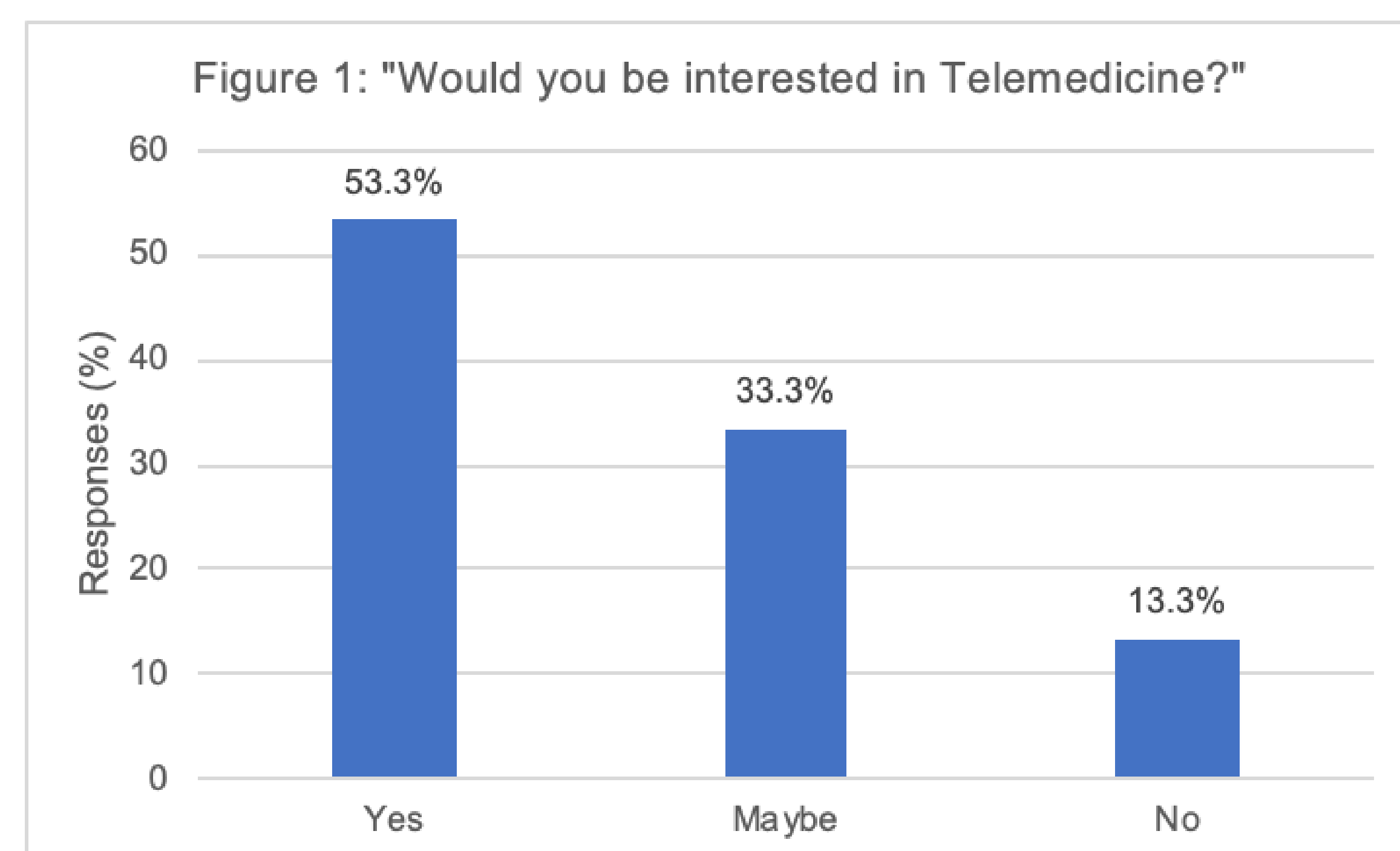
PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study was to assess patients' attitudes towards telemedicine at the University of Kentucky Internal Medicine Clinic. Part of this assessment included looking for possible patient concerns to telemedicine, such as education status, income level, and distance to travel to receive care.

METHODS

This study was a simple, exploratory randomized quantitative study. For one week, surveys were offered to all patients who entered the University of Kentucky Internal Medicine Clinic by Physician Assistant students. 50 surveys were handed out that contained a variety of questions pertaining to interest in telemedicine, income, zip code, education, and comfort with technology/internet. All of these questions were graded on a Likert scale. Surveys that had no more than 4 blank boxes were then analyzed in Microsoft Excel utilizing the Data Analysis package. 45 surveys met the qualifications (n=45). The statistical test performed was a two tailed t-test with an alpha level of 0.05.

RESULTS



SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Simple summation found that 53.3% of patients surveyed were interested in telemedicine.

When assessing barriers to care, there were no significant findings regarding distance traveled ($p < 0.4992$), or self-reported income bracket ($p < 0.5706$). However statistically significant findings were found in education ($p < 0.0267$) and patients with access to technology ($p < 0.0143$)

DISCUSSION

Results indicated that there is a general interest in telemedicine. Research found that the more accessible the patient finds telemedicine, the more likely the population will be interested. It was also found that the more education a patient has obtained, the more likely the population will be interested in utilizing telemedicine.

Regarding barriers to care, the only finding this study found was that there was a disparity between interest in telemedicine regarding education. As telemedicine comes of age it is important that all patients feel comfortable utilizing it. This finding should prompt patient education to ensure that all patients of all education backgrounds feel comfortable using telemedicine.

CONCLUSION

Our findings suggest that patients at the University of Kentucky Internal Medicine clinic are interested and see the utility of telemedicine. Though there was some concerns, as telemedicine is implemented patients will find more ease of use with the system and targeted patient education efforts will increase confidence using telemedicine. The COVID-19 pandemic is also serving as a catalyst for the evolution of telemedicine.

REFERENCES

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