

## Background:

A major incident is “an event that, owing to the number, severity, type or location of live casualties, requires special arrangements by the health services”.<sup>1</sup> A major incident protocol should include specific arrangements for the unique needs of children. There are significant gaps in current literature with respect to paediatric major incident planning.<sup>2</sup>

The aim of this study is to identify current deficiencies regarding paediatric major incident protocols by examining front-line staff opinions.

## Methods:

A quantitative, cross-sectional study using an anonymised online questionnaire was performed over a 4 week period in two mixed (treating both children and adults) emergency departments. Staff working in the areas of emergency medicine, paediatrics, orthopaedics and anaesthesia were surveyed.

## Outcome measures:

- 1) Major incident protocol awareness
- 2) Readiness to deal with a paediatric major incident
- 3) Self reported education and training needs.

## Results:

A total of 51 responses were recorded. 30 participants (58.8%) worked in emergency medicine; 10 (19.6%) in paediatrics and 8 (15.7%) in anaesthesia. 26 participants (60.5%) reported that they had never read the major incident protocol (Fig 1).

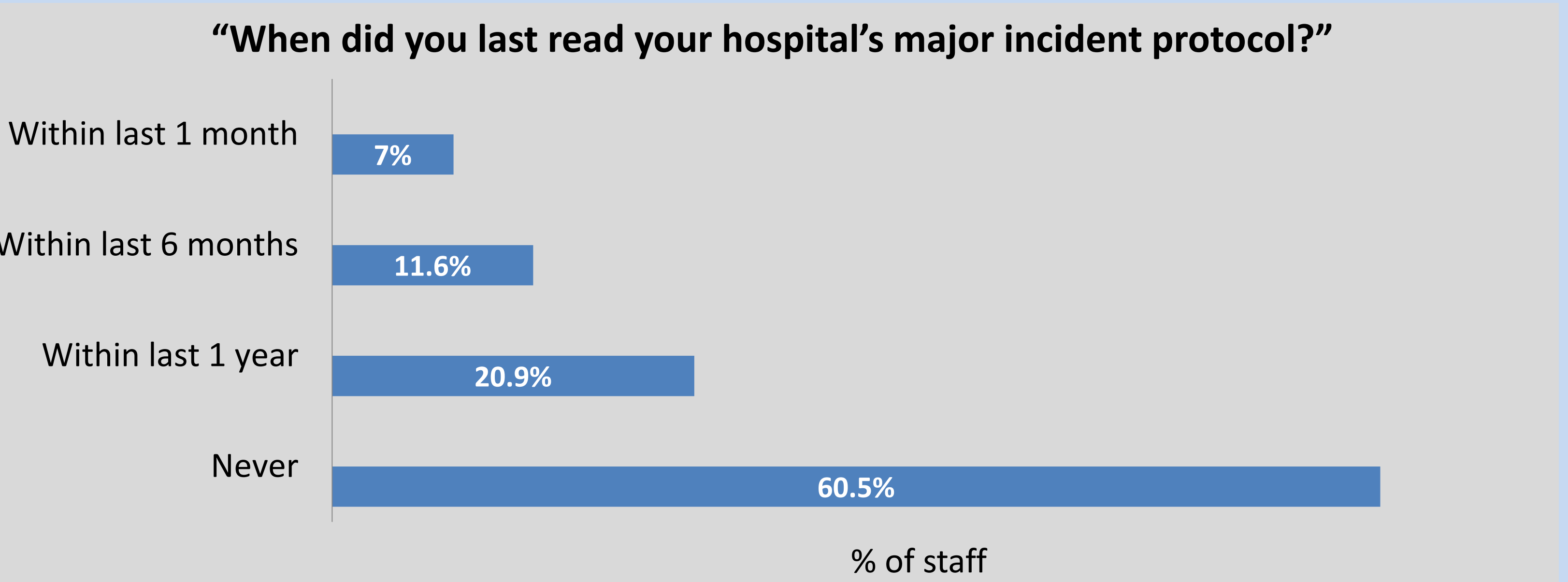


Figure 1: Staff engagement with written major incident policy

Most staff felt “somewhat ready” or “not at all ready” to deal with a paediatric major incident. Personal concerns are listed in Table 1. Simulation training was the preferred educational method. (Fig 2)

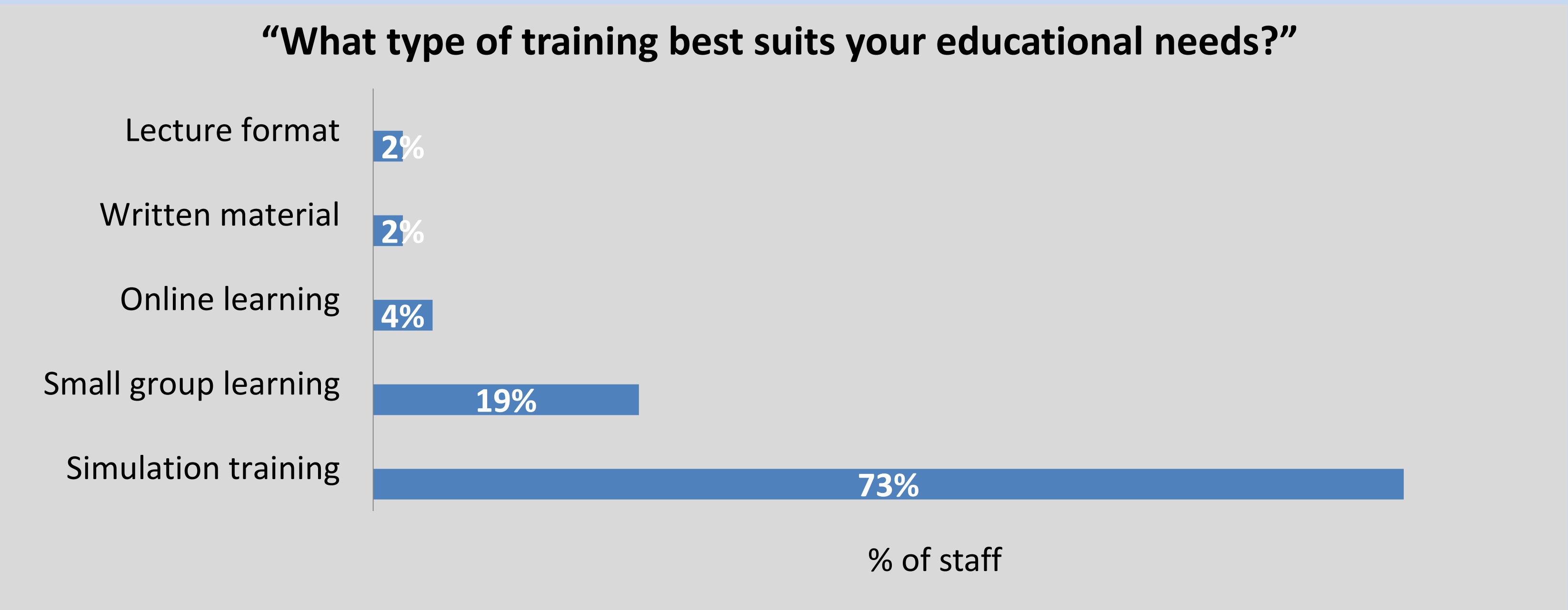


Figure 2: Staff training preferences

Specific concerns:	Examples of comments:
Lack of personal experience	“No experience of an event for 20 years”
Lack of experienced staff	“No specific paed ED consultant”
Equipment	“Lack of age appropriate equipment”
Insufficient training	“Haven't had the training yet”
Limited resources	“Out of hours big problem”
Overcrowded department	“Paeds ED not suited, ED in general too small”
Heightened emotions	“Human feelings”

Table 1: Concerns raised by staff

## Discussion

This small, local study identifies deficiencies in the level of preparedness of front line staff regarding paediatric major incidents.

## Conclusion

This survey demonstrates a need for increased awareness of major incident protocols. Specific concerns identified by staff may provide an opportunity for future education and training.

## References

1. *Emergency planning in the NHS: health services arrangements for dealing with major incidents*, HC (90) 25 HMSO 1990
2. Hodgetts T et al *Major incident medical management and support; Advanced life support group* London; BMJ publishing group 1995

## Acknowledgements:

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