

# THE VALUE OF VIRTUAL SIMULATIONS FOR PREPARING SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS TO WORK IN HEALTHCARE SETTINGS

Mary Mulvaney, LMSW, ACSW, Adjunct Professor; Philippa J. Mason, MSSW Candidate 2021

## Background:

For seven years, the interprofessional simulation program has been preparing social work students to work with other disciplines, such as nursing, pharmacy, and medicine, in physical and mental health care settings.

Interprofessional collaboration is key to effective practice, with research demonstrating benefits such as higher patient satisfaction, shorter hospital stays, and lower costs.

## Objective:

The Covid-19 pandemic forced the objective of rapidly adapting these simulations to a virtual format. As part of that, we sought to learn the broader merits and limitations of delivering highly interactive learning experiences virtually.

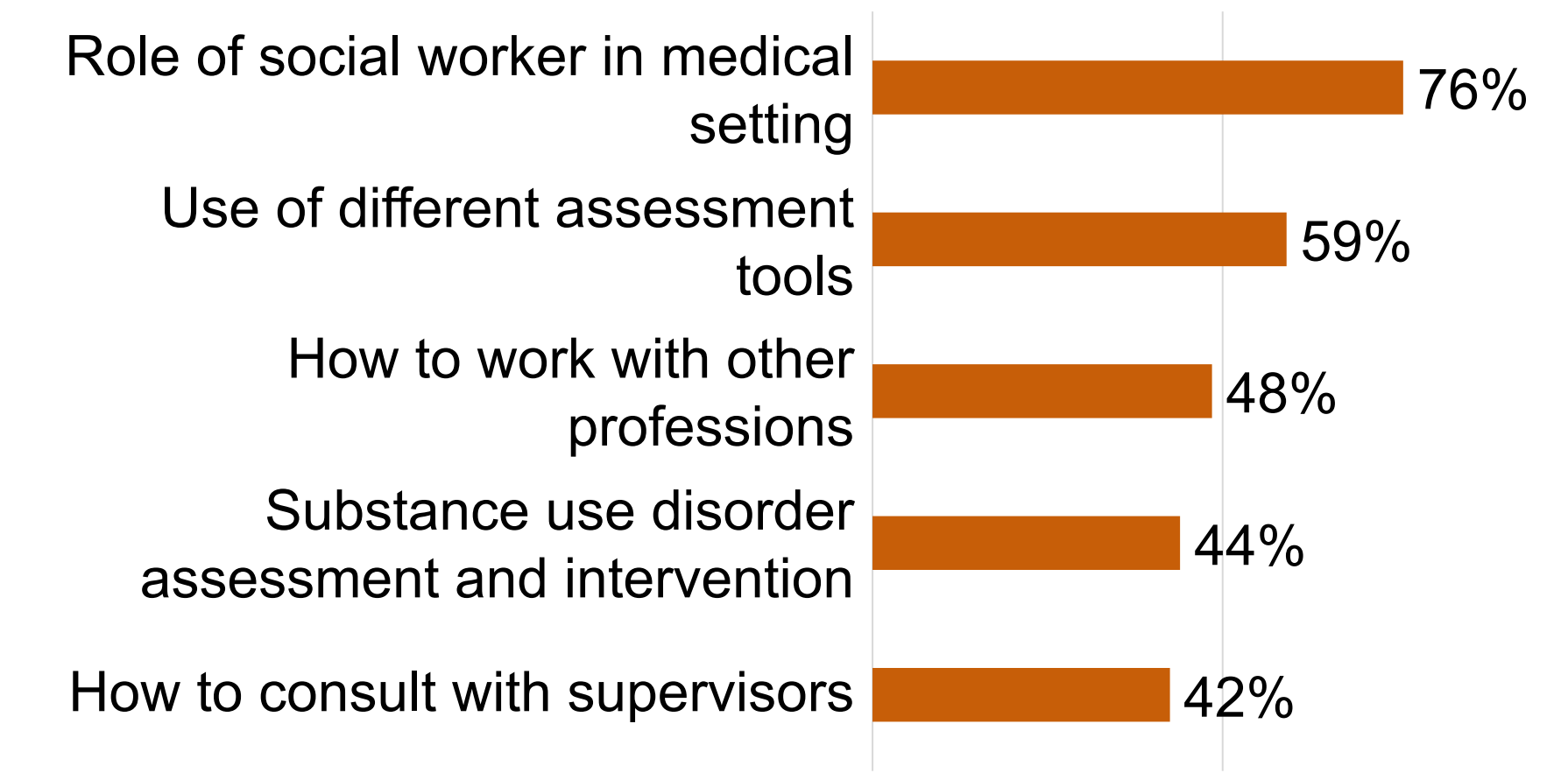
## Methods:

The simulation topics included “Hospital Day”, End of Life, Detox, Care Team Planning, and a Disaster Drill. The simulations allowed students to practice a variety of skills, including interviewing, assessment, treatment planning, group facilitation, case management, crisis intervention, documentation, and interprofessional communication and collaboration. Sessions utilized breakout rooms to give students opportunities to role play case specific clients and situations under the supervision of a social worker who gave immediate feedback.

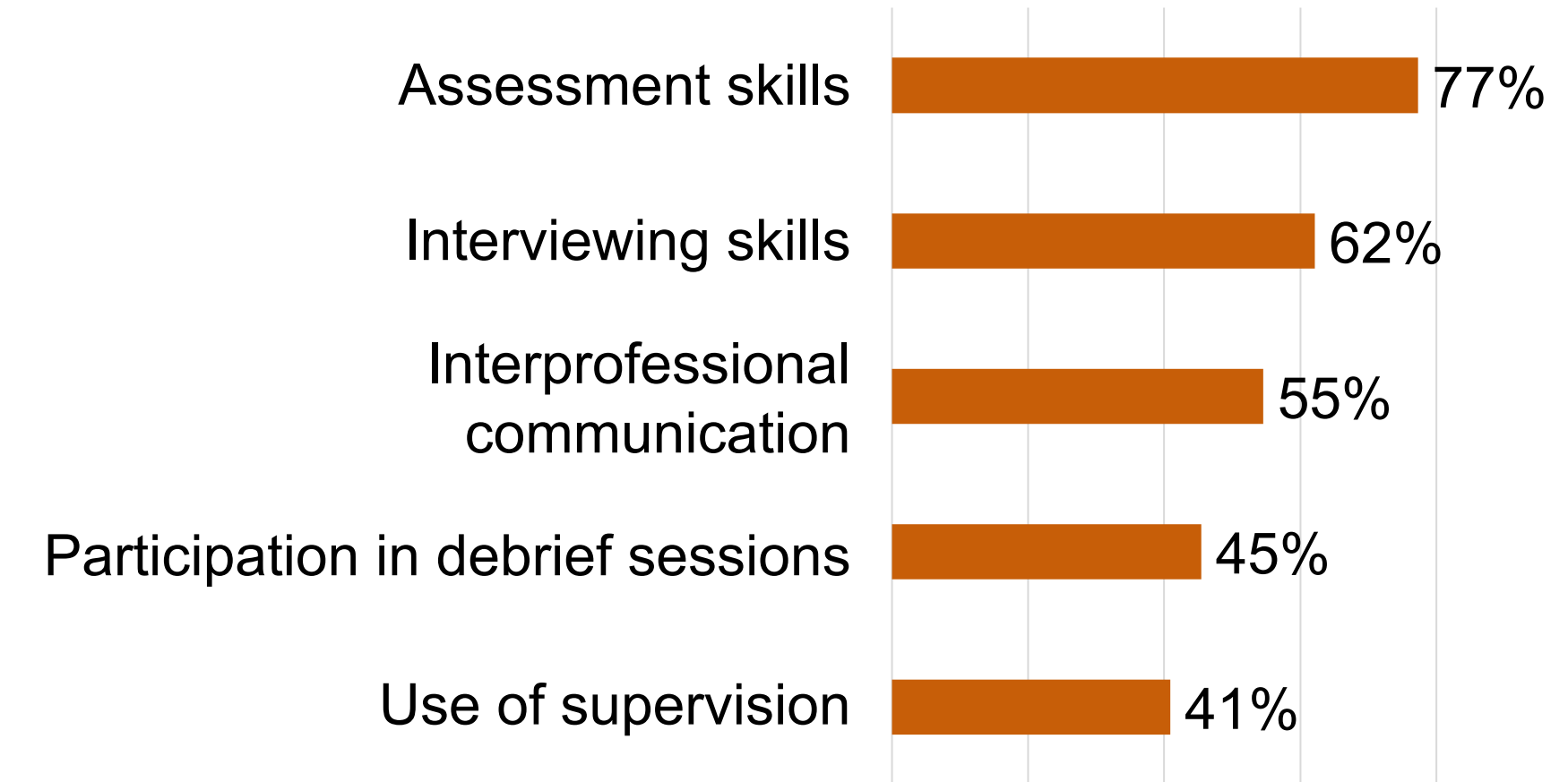
## Findings:

66 students completed a Qualtrics survey giving feedback to improve the experience for future participants.

Students were asked to “identify any topics you gained new knowledge in through the process of preparing for and participating in the simulation.” Their top 5 selections were:



Students also reported what skills they practiced during the simulation. Their top 5 selections were:



## Findings cont’d:

In free responses, students highlighted what they saw as key benefits of the simulation:

| Theme                                  | # responses | Example feedback  |
|--|-------------|---|
| Supervision was helpful                | 36          | “the ability to “time-out” and use supervision”   |
| Role play format was valuable          | 20          | “opportunity to practice real-life situations without the pressure of having to work with real clients in the moment” |
| Collaboration with other professionals | 7           | “speaking with other professionals within and outside of your own field”  |

## Conclusion:

The virtual simulation format was successful, as 79% of students reported that “this was a really valuable learning experience for me” and 100% of faculty/volunteer supervisors reported the experience was valuable for students. Students reported similar levels of satisfaction for prior in-person simulations as for virtual. Consistent positive responses across simulations, spring and fall, show the ability to replicate the experience. Providing supervision and guidance throughout the simulation provided maximum growth opportunities. The virtual format reduced logistical issues since only a computer and internet were required. These simulations will continue to be used even when the in-person process begins again.

### Acknowledgement:

The simulation case studies were based on scenarios developed by the UT School of Nursing.

References: Greiner, A., Knebel, E., & Institute of Medicine (U.S.). (2003). Health Professions Education : A Bridge to Quality. National Academies Press.

