

Insights Into a Better Workplace: Survey of Ophthalmology Clinic Staff Reveals Improvement Opportunities

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Background

- The National Academy of Medicine addresses healthcare safety and quality in the United States¹
 - ✓ Timely care: avoid harmful delays
 - ✓ Efficient care: prevent waste of equipment, supplies, ideas, and energy

Clinic workflow affects both timeliness and efficiency
- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality on workflow²:
 - Steps taken to complete job responsibilities in work setting
 - Can be physical and mental tasks
 - Can occur sequentially or simultaneously
- Ophthalmology relies on smooth clinic flow and efficiency.
 - COVID-19: Increased telemedicine, online patient messages, and staff work hours to accommodate urgent care and patient backlogs³⁻⁶.
- Crucial: Streamline workflow efficiency in this fast-paced field.

Methods

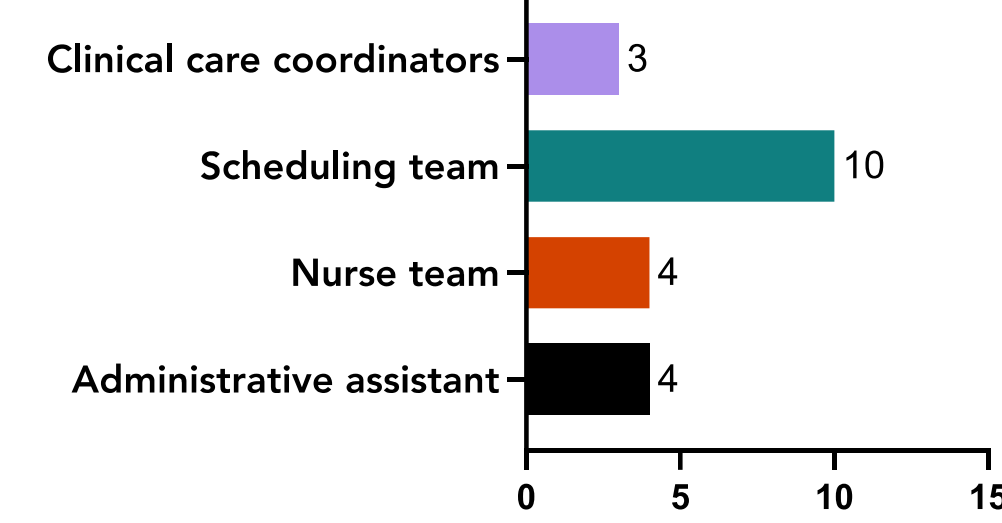
- Participants:** Ophthalmology clinic support staff, at 3 clinic locations, academic ophthalmology department in Sacramento, California.
- Excluded:** Physicians, medical students, and medical scribes.
- All survey respondents confirmed agreement in study participation before proceeding with anonymous survey questions.
- 9-question survey:** categorical, free-response, & Likert questionnaire:
 - Participant's role in the clinic, number & types of emails received, satisfaction with workflow, and suggestions for improvement.
 - Hand delivered to the survey participants, collected in anonymous return box.
 - Manually transcribed from hard-copy questionnaires onto Microsoft Excel for all nine questions.
 - Prism Graphpad 9.5 (San Diego, CA) for graphical summaries.

Results

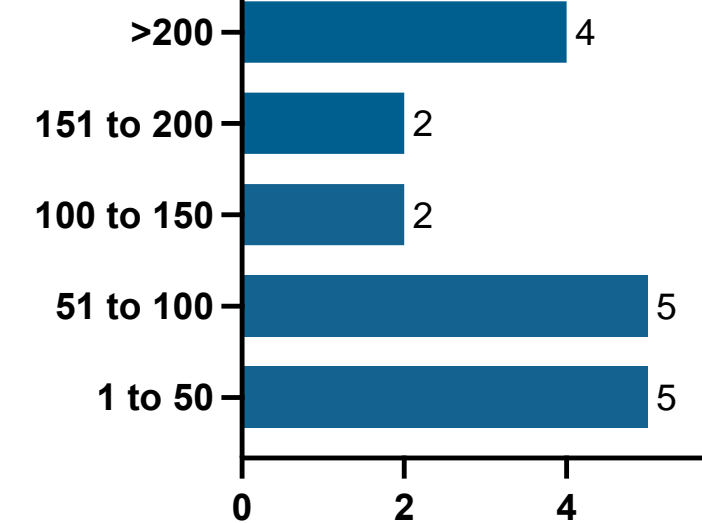
- 22 surveys** were distributed: **100%** response received. **4** were excluded (lack of thorough completion).
- 81%** (18/22) surveys included for final analysis
- Clinical care coordinators, scheduling staff, nursing team, and administrative assistants

Survey Questions and Results

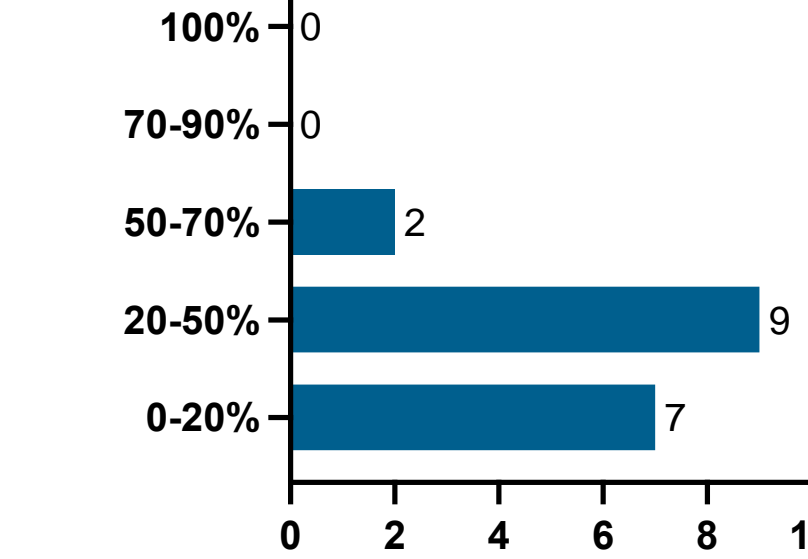
1. Role in clinical care:



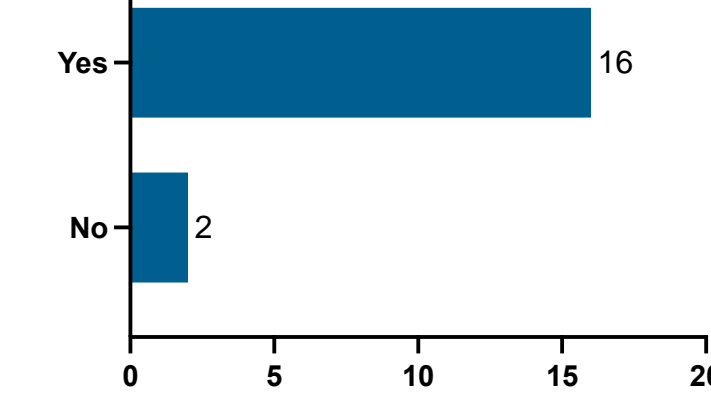
2. Number of messages received per week:



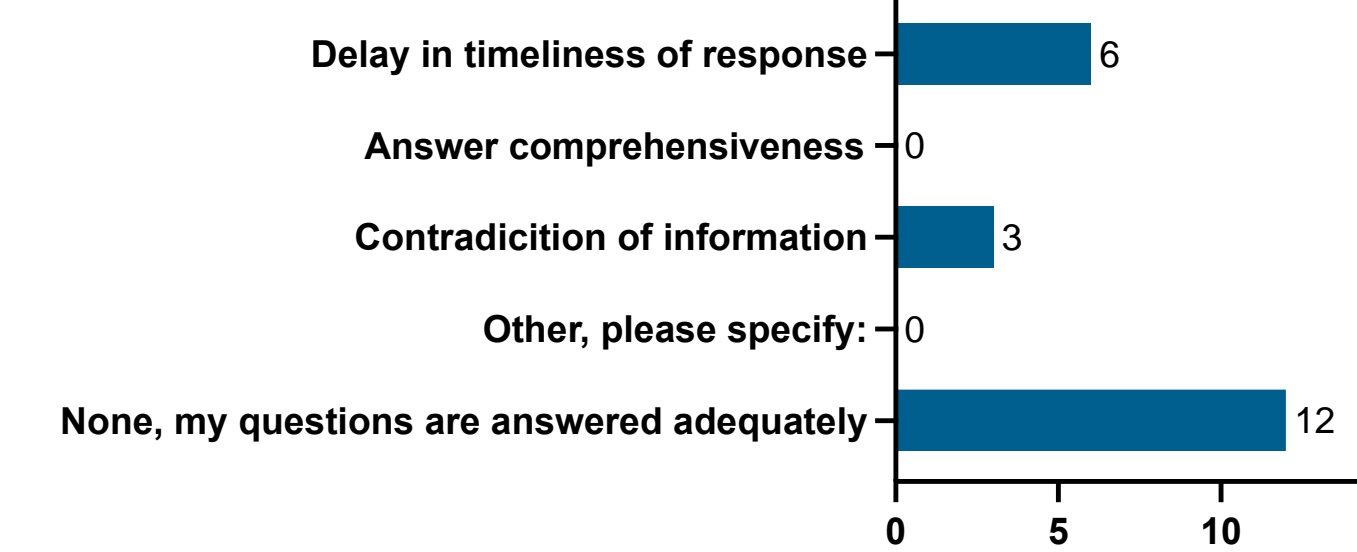
3. Percent of messages necessary to forward:



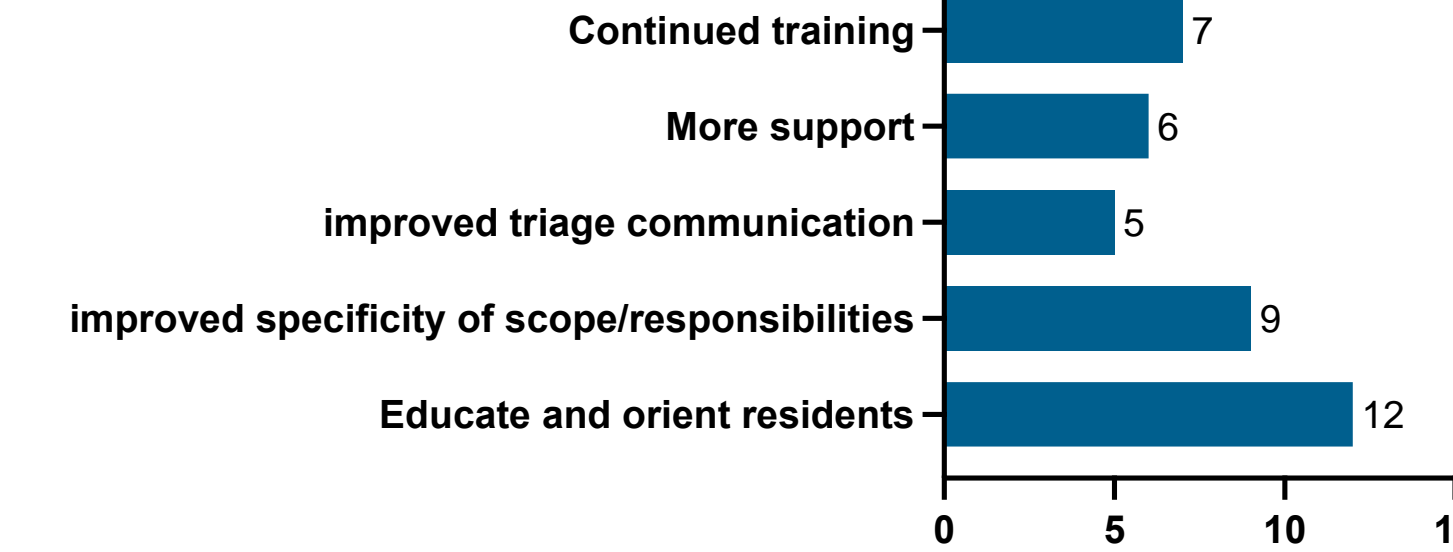
4. Do providers respond adequately to forwarded messages:



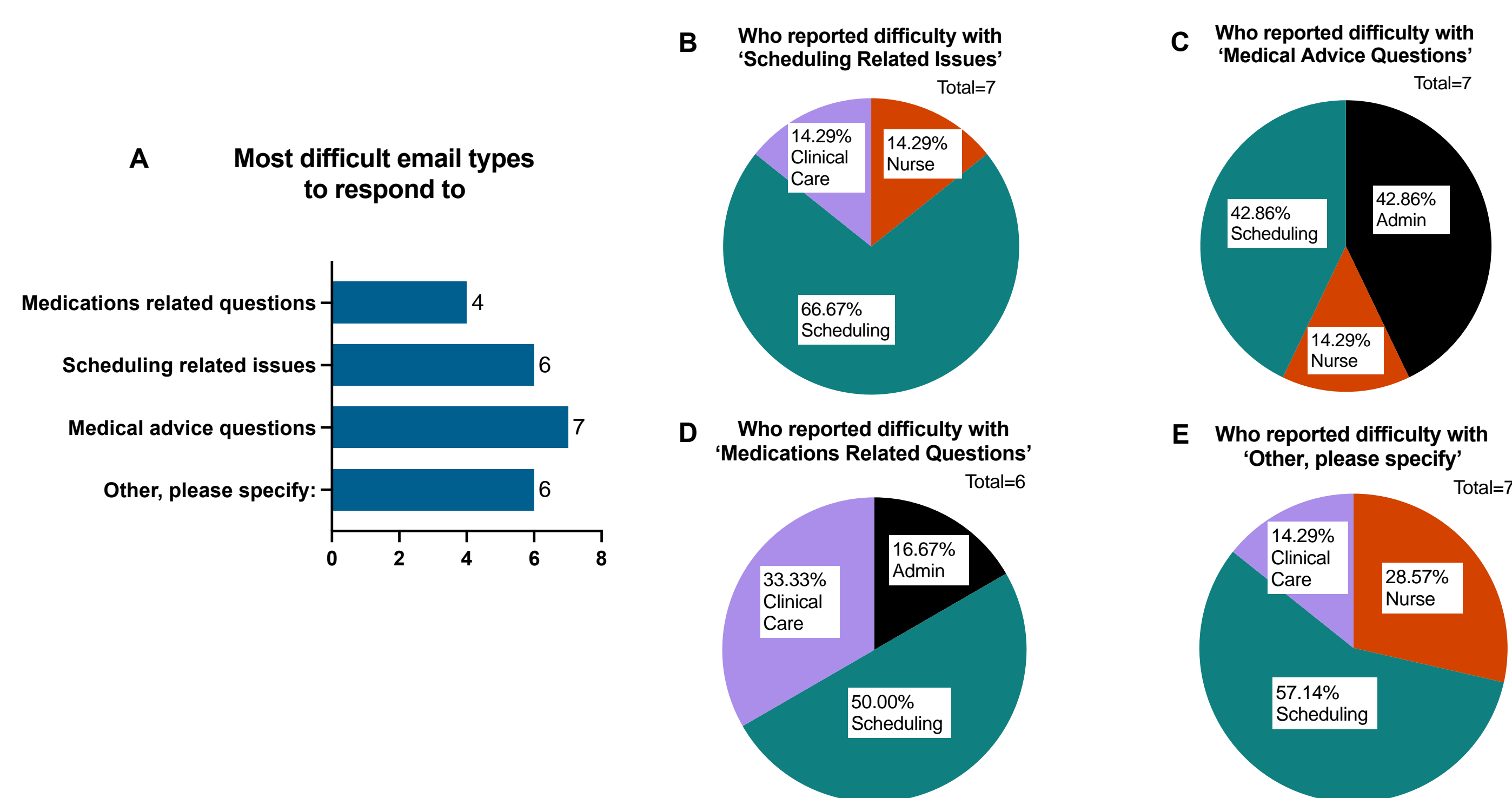
5. Barriers to receiving an adequate response:



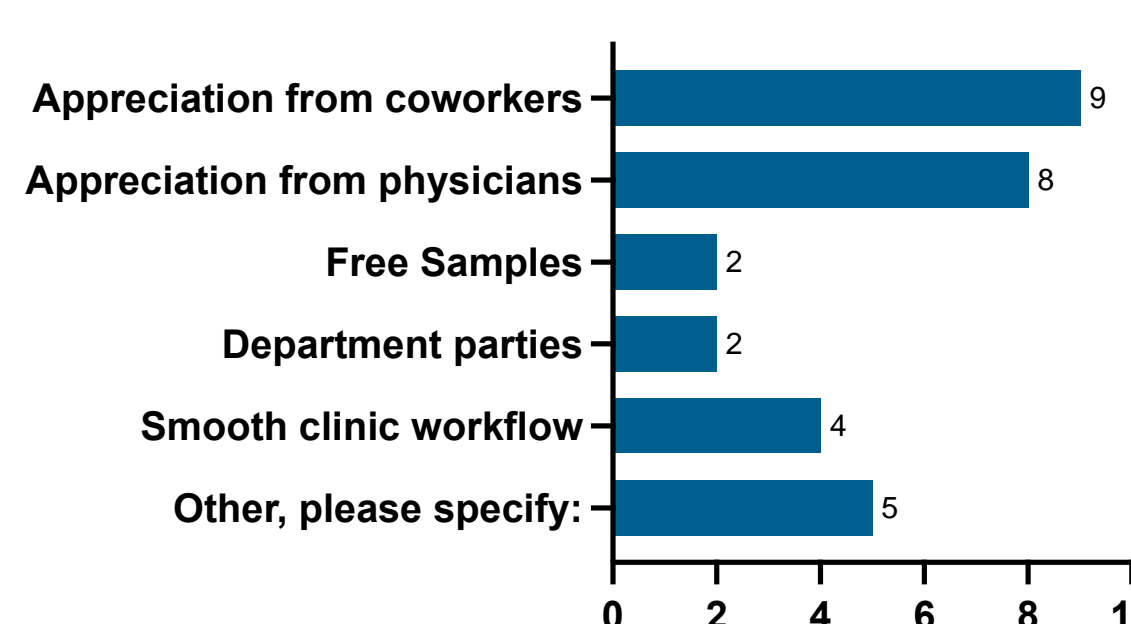
6. Suggestions for improvement:



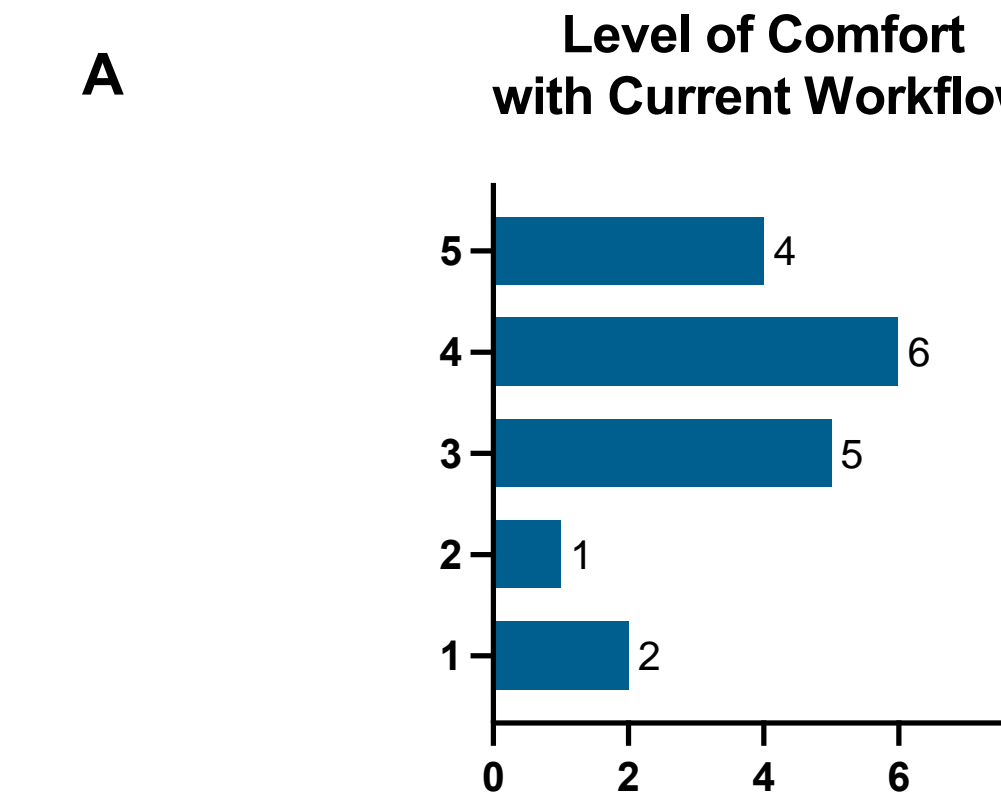
7. Most difficult email types to answer (A) and break down of how teams responded to each answer choice (B-E)



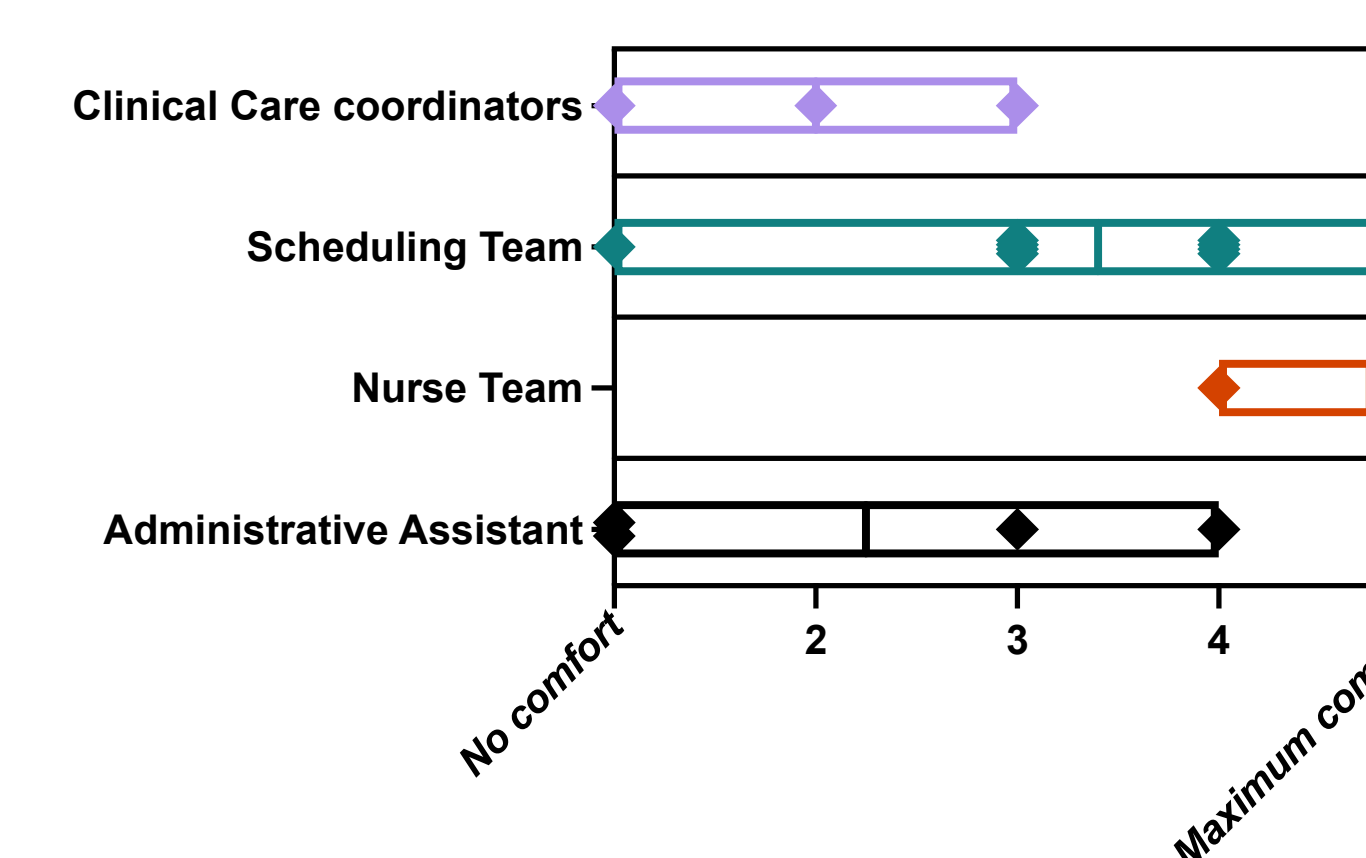
9. Most exciting aspects of the job



8. Level of comfort with current workflow in total (A) and break down of satisfaction based on team (B)



B. Level of Comfort With Current Workflow Per Role



Discussion

- Staff overall satisfied with the current workflow and their jobs
- Two specific ways to improve workflow**
 - Better resident orientation in email communication
 - Nursing team best at answering clinical care related messages.
- 67% of participants suggested better education/orientation of residents.
 - Send messages to appropriate recipients
 - Interprofessional communication crucial in residency training⁷
- Nurse team rates at least 4/5 comfort with current workflow
 - Non-medical trained personnel uncomfortable answering patient requests
 - May increase staff stress, decrease job satisfaction, and delay response time.
 - Transitioning to a nursing team for processing patient messages is necessary and will improve staff and patient experience⁸

Major study limitations

- small sample size
- relevant specifically to ophthalmology departments, reduces the generalizability to other specialty departments.

Conclusions

- Workflow efficiency, adequate physician communication, orientation of trainees, and appreciation in the workplace are crucial to improve employee morale and job satisfaction.
- A larger study can help identify areas for system-level improvements in work environments to reduce staff burnout and enhance patient satisfaction.

References

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