

Rheumatologist Survey on Medical Cannabis: Results from the Ontario Best Practices Research Initiative (OBRI)

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BACKGROUND

- With the recent legalization of cannabis in Canada and easier access, it is important to understand whether rheumatologists who see patients with chronic pain and chronic inflammatory disease are assessing its use and what sources of medical cannabis information would be of benefit to them in their practice. The Canadian Rheumatology Association has recently published their position statement on medical cannabis use in rheumatic disease, <http://rheum.ca/resources/publications/>.

OBJECTIVES

- To assess rheumatologist’s knowledge of medical cannabis and their comfort level with authorizing it’s use.

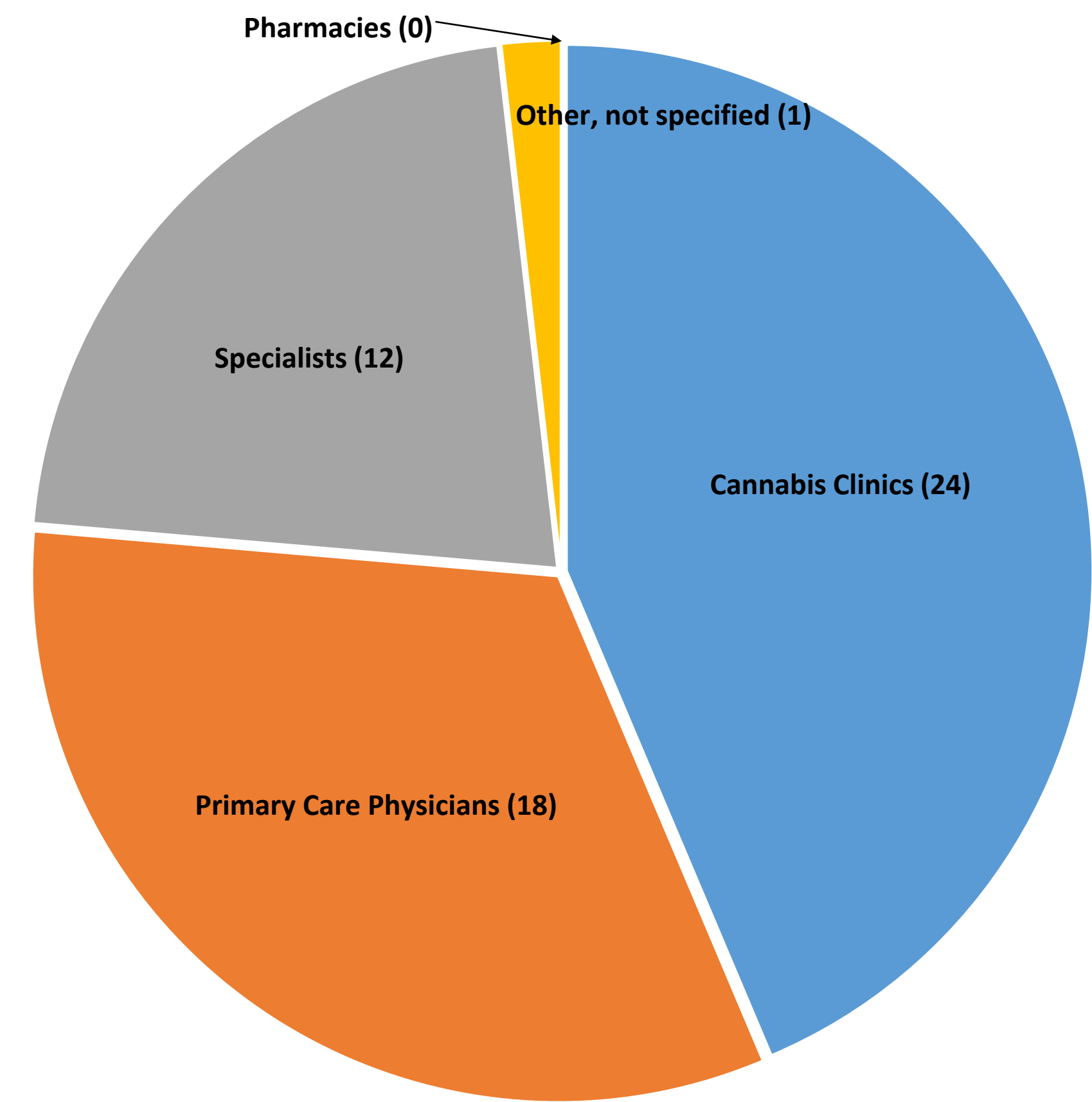
METHODS

- Rheumatologists participating in the Ontario Best Practices Research Initiative (OBRI), a registry of RA patients followed in routine care in Ontario, Canada, were sent an email with a link to the medical cannabis survey.
- Survey questions were created by the OBRI, in collaboration with their Clinical and Patient Advisory Committees (OBRI CAC and PAC).
- After the initial email, a second and third email reminder to complete the survey, were sent one week apart.

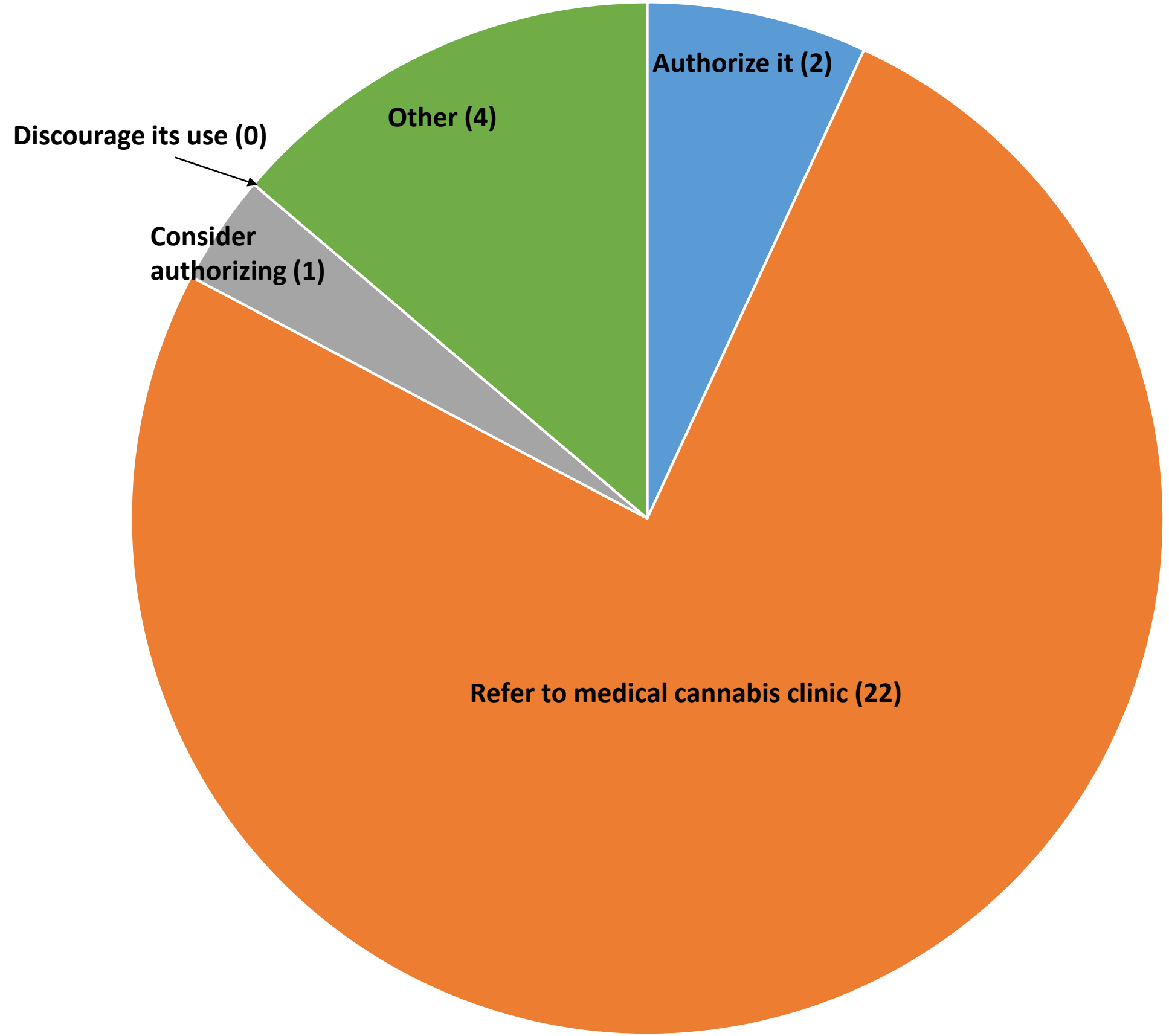
RESULTS

- 29 out of 66 (44%) rheumatologists completed the survey between January 15 – May 3, 2019.
- 66% of the rheumatologists who completed the survey were female. 41% were between the ages of 41-59 years, 31% were ≤ 40 years of age and 28% were ≥ 60 years of age.
- The survey responders were evenly distributed with respect to community versus academic practices (45% community, 41% academic, 14% both)

Which Healthcare Professional Should be Responsible for Authorizing Medical Cannabis*



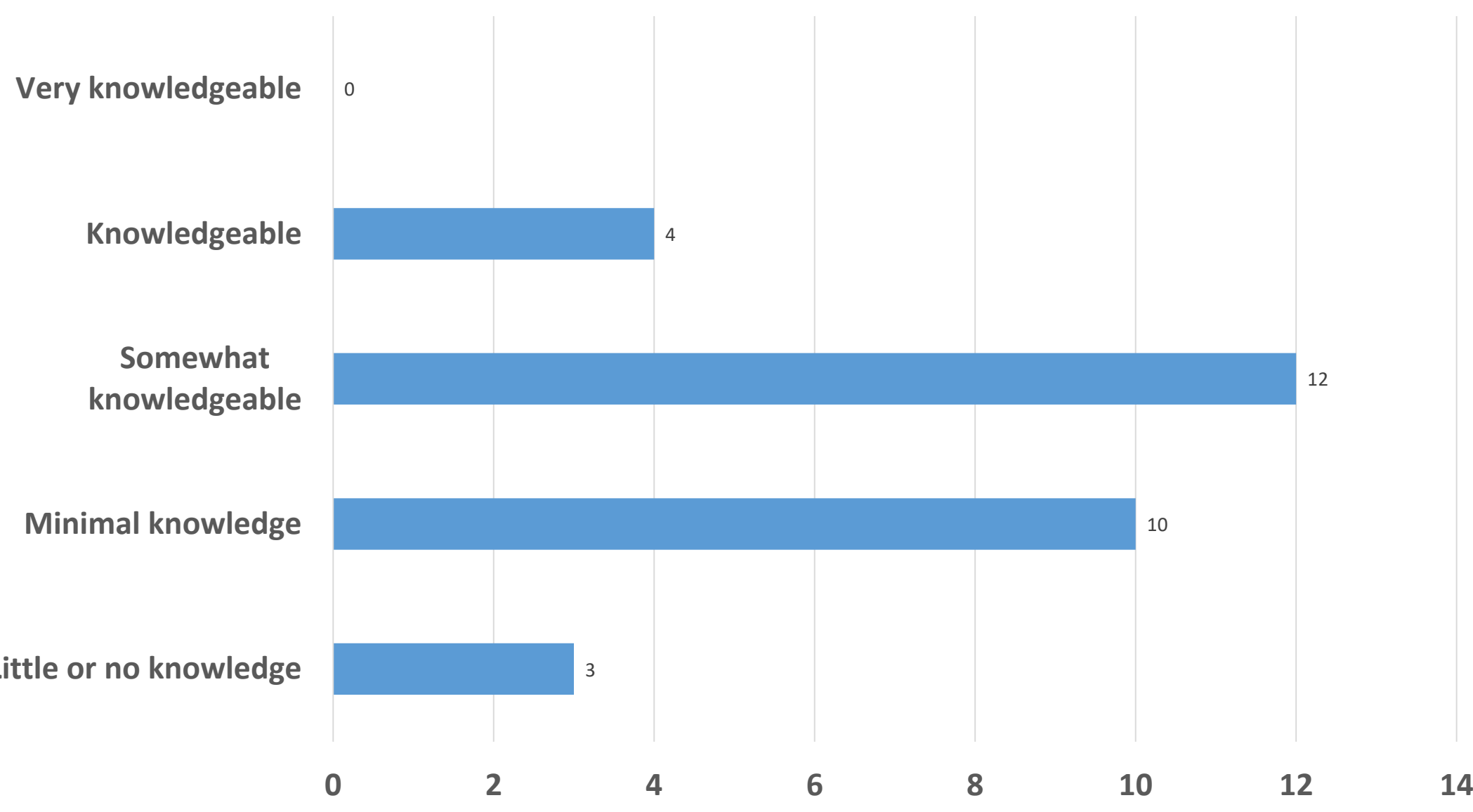
What Would you do if Your Patient Requested Medical Cannabis



*Rheumatologist were given the option to chose more than one answer

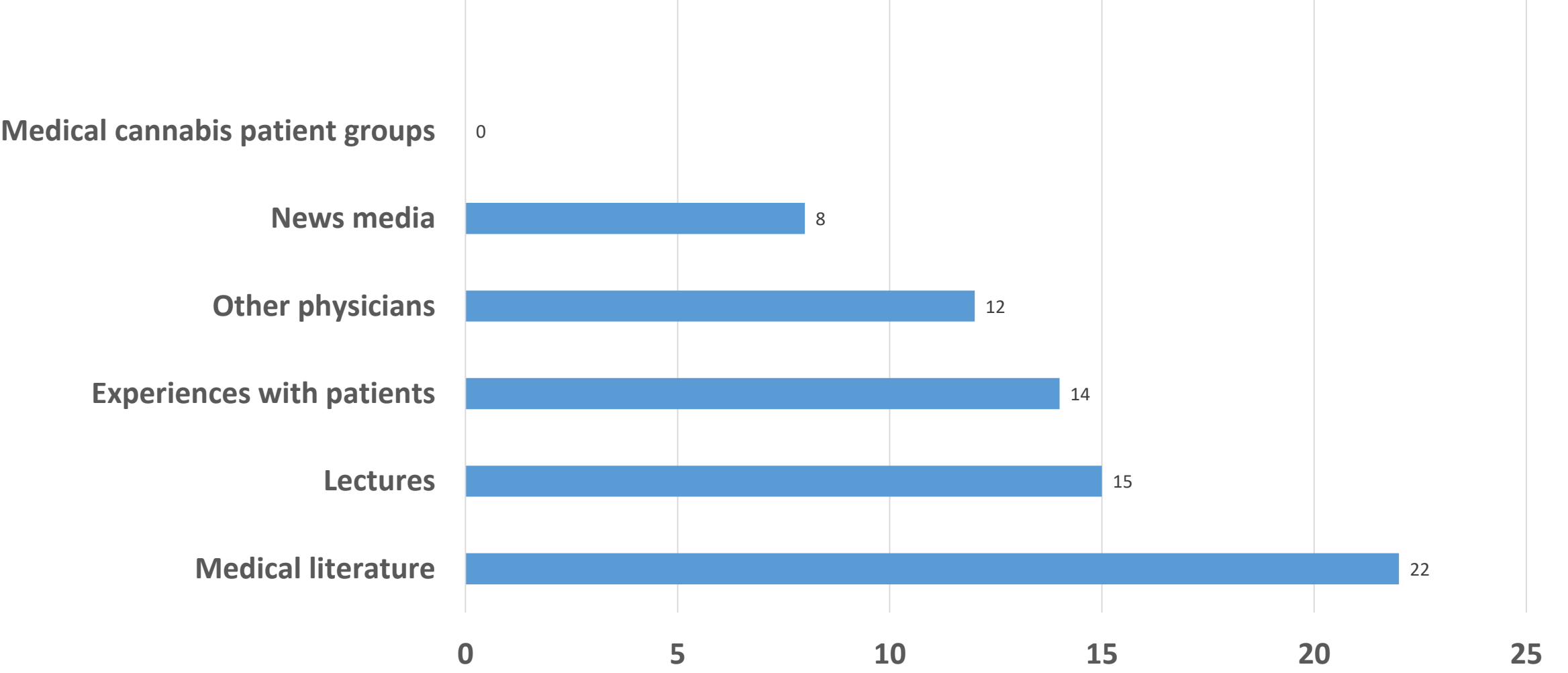
Survey Question	Number of Rheumatologists (N = 29)
Have you ever authorized the use of medical cannabis? (Yes)	9
Do you routinely ask your patients if they are using medical cannabis? (Yes)	22
Which diagnosis do the majority of your patients using medical cannabis fall under?*	
Osteoarthritis	12
Rheumatoid Arthritis	9
Chronic Pain	8
Fibromyalgia	7
Psoriatic Arthritis	4
Spondyloarthropathy	4
Back Pain	2
Other (Mood / Insomnia / Neck Pain)	3
How comfortable do you feel authorizing patients to use medical cannabis?	
Very comfortable	2
Comfortable	3
Somewhat comfortable	2
Somewhat uncomfortable	11
Not comfortable	8
Very uncomfortable	3
What concerns/barriers do you have with regards to authorizing the use of medical cannabis?*	
Lack of research / peer reviewed literature	20
Lack of knowledge	18
Lack of product standardization or prescription-related information (i.e., potency/dose, strain, quality)	18
Potential for misuse / abuse	14
Liability	13
Other (personal beliefs / lack of time)	2
None	1
Are you knowledgeable of the Canadian medical cannabis regulations, i.e., how patients can access medical cannabis?	
Little or no knowledge	6
Minimal knowledge	9
Somewhat knowledgeable	11
Knowledgeable	2
Very knowledgeable	1
Would you be interested in participating in a practice review to better understand how many of your patients are currently using medical cannabis and what symptoms the are treating with medical cannabis? (Yes)	18
Would you consider participating in a clinical trial looking at the effectiveness of medical cannabis in inflammatory arthritis patients, if you were required as part of this trial to:	
Authorize use of medical cannabis? (Yes)	11
Refer patients to a cannabis clinic for authorization to use medical cannabis? (Yes)	17

Rate your Knowledge of Medical Cannabis



Number of Rheumatologists

What are your Sources of Information for Medical Cannabis*



Number of Rheumatologists

*Rheumatologist were given the option to chose more than one answer

CONCLUSIONS

- Most rheumatologists in Ontario are routinely assessing the use of medical cannabis by their patients.
- While the majority of rheumatologists are not authorizing medical cannabis use, they are also not discouraging use in their patients.
- More research is is needed to increase rheumatologists’ knowledge and comfort level with medical cannabis use.
- The OBRI is currently surveying patients attending rheumatology clinics, in Ontario, to better understand the use of medical cannabis in this population.

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