

Implementing virtual group psychoeducation in the FND treatment pathway: a service evaluation

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Introduction

Management of Functional Neurological Disorders (FND) is complex, and few specialist services in the UK provide a multidisciplinary approach to this common and disabling condition.

The role of psychoeducation is essential for the treatment of FND as promoting a good understanding and acceptance of the diagnosis is likely to have a positive influence on recovery.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have implemented a single virtual psychoeducation session delivered by the lead neuropsychiatry consultant (PP) for our FND service.

We report our evaluation of a virtual psychoeducation group implemented as an initial step in our treatment pathway for FND in the Neuropsychiatry Department at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery.

Aim

We wanted to examine whether this intervention has a positive impact on the acceptance of the diagnosis and uptake of treatment for FND.

Method

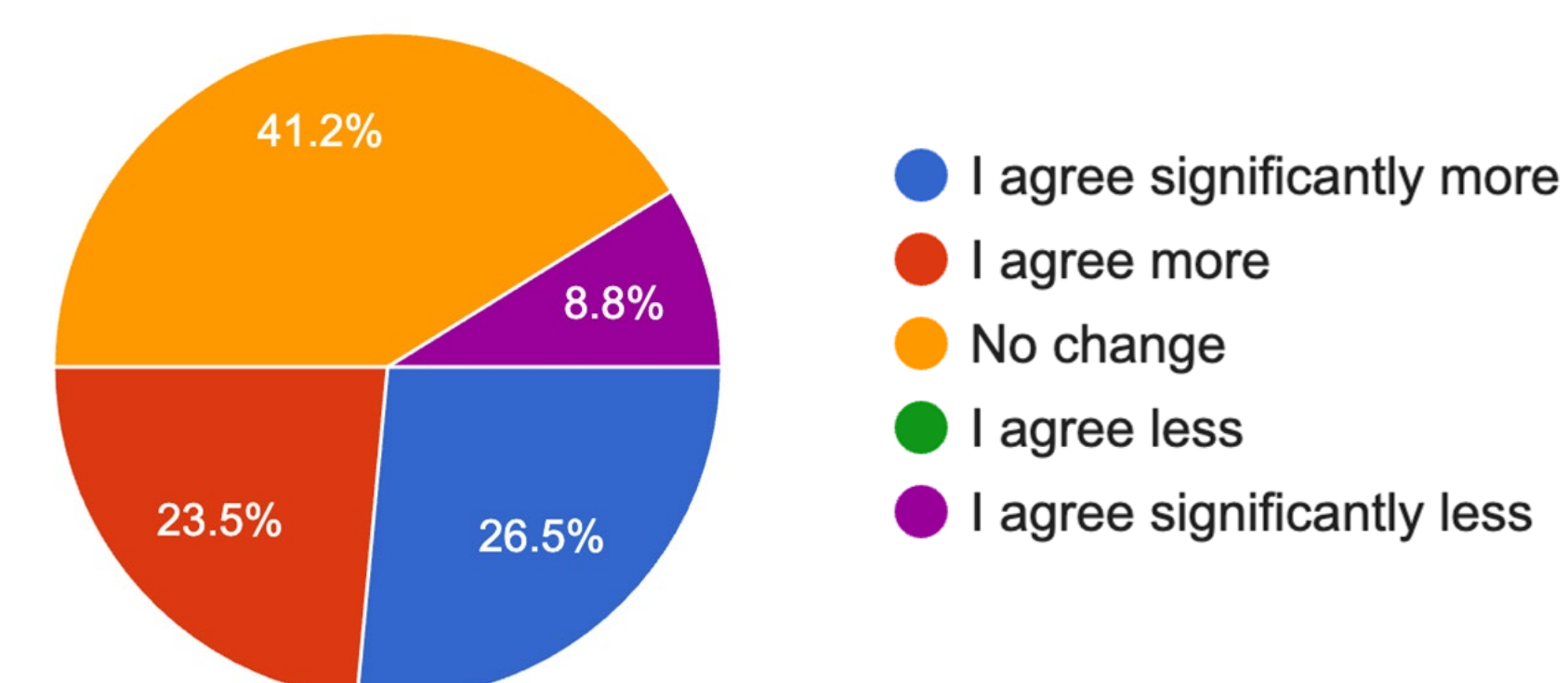
Over 200 patients referred to our FND service between 2021 and 2023 were invited to attend a virtual group psychoeducation session as an initial step in our FND treatment pathway.

The session lasts two hours, and patients are allowed to ask questions. Patients are contacted within three days following the session and asked if they wish to proceed with an individual assessment in the multidisciplinary clinic to decide on further treatment, including outpatient and inpatient treatment programmes.

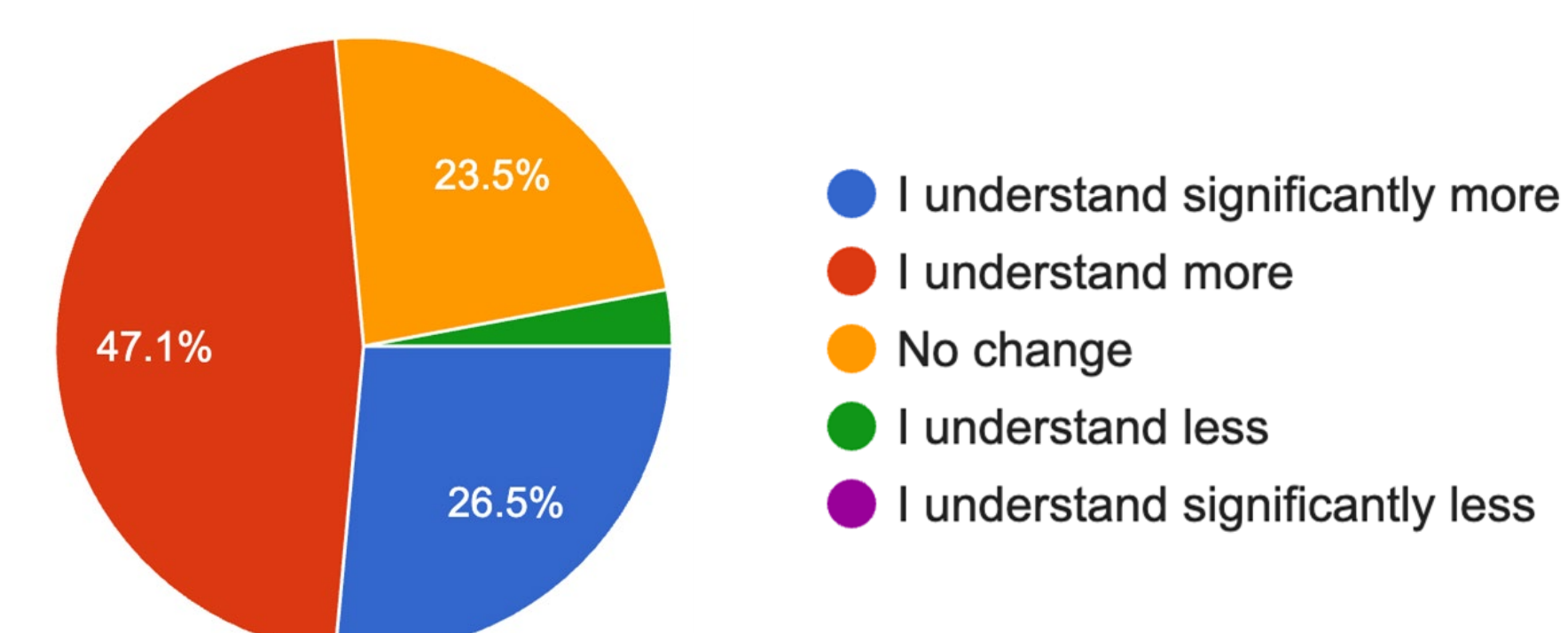
For this Service Evaluation, patients were invited to complete an online post-session survey, the results of which were anonymous.

Results

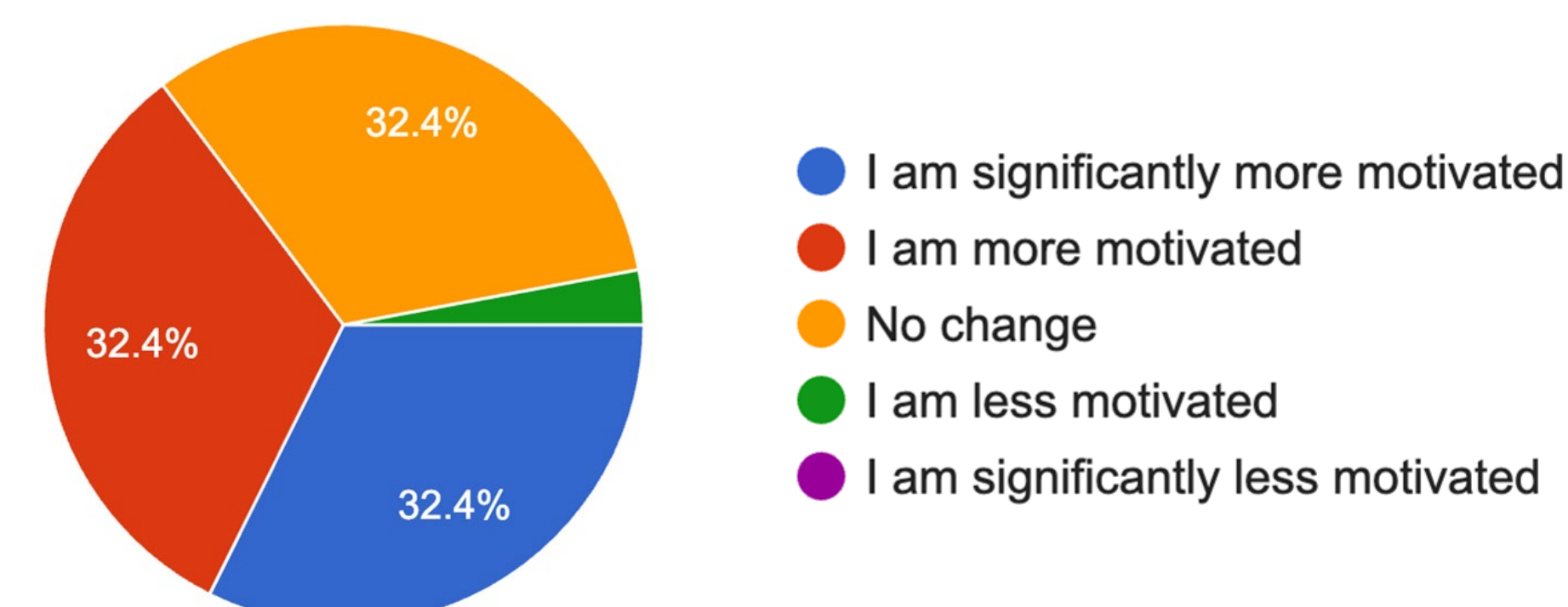
1) Did the online group education session change how much you agree with / or have confidence in your diagnosis of FND? (34 responses)



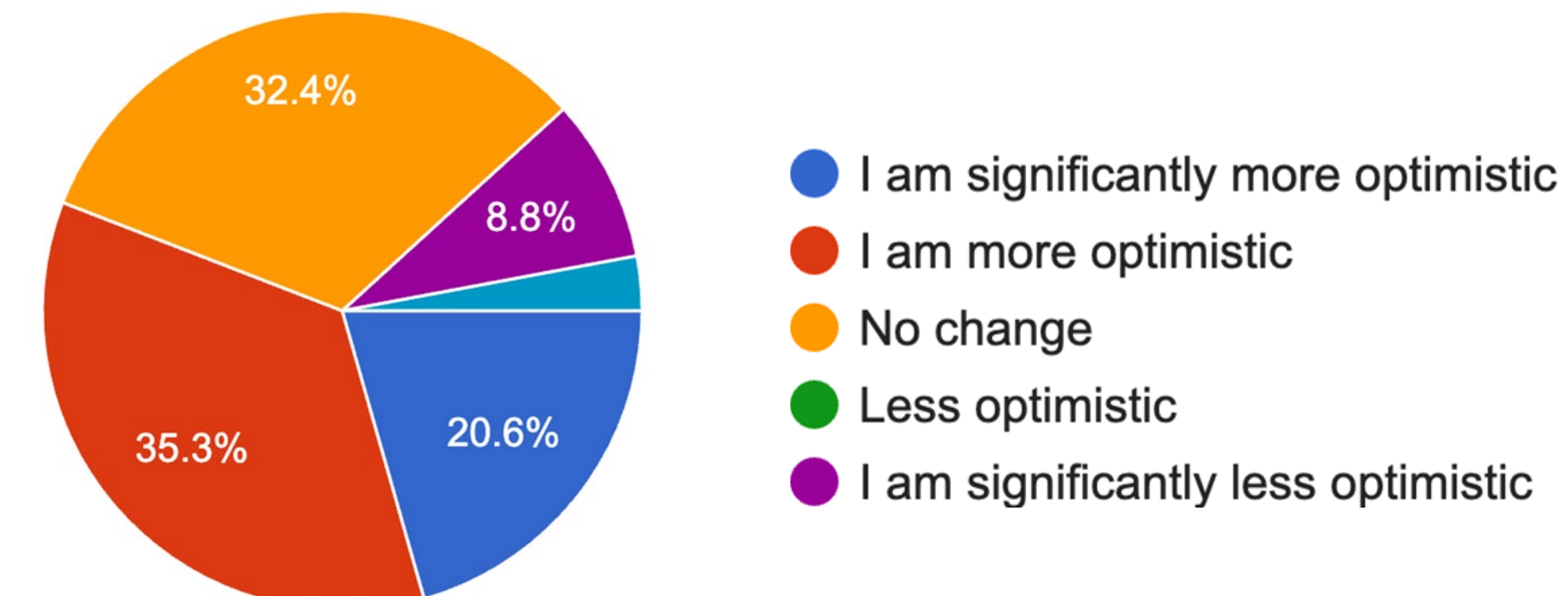
1) Did the online group education session change your understanding of FND? (34 responses)



1) Did the online group education session change your motivation to proceed with further assessment and treatment of FND? (34 responses)

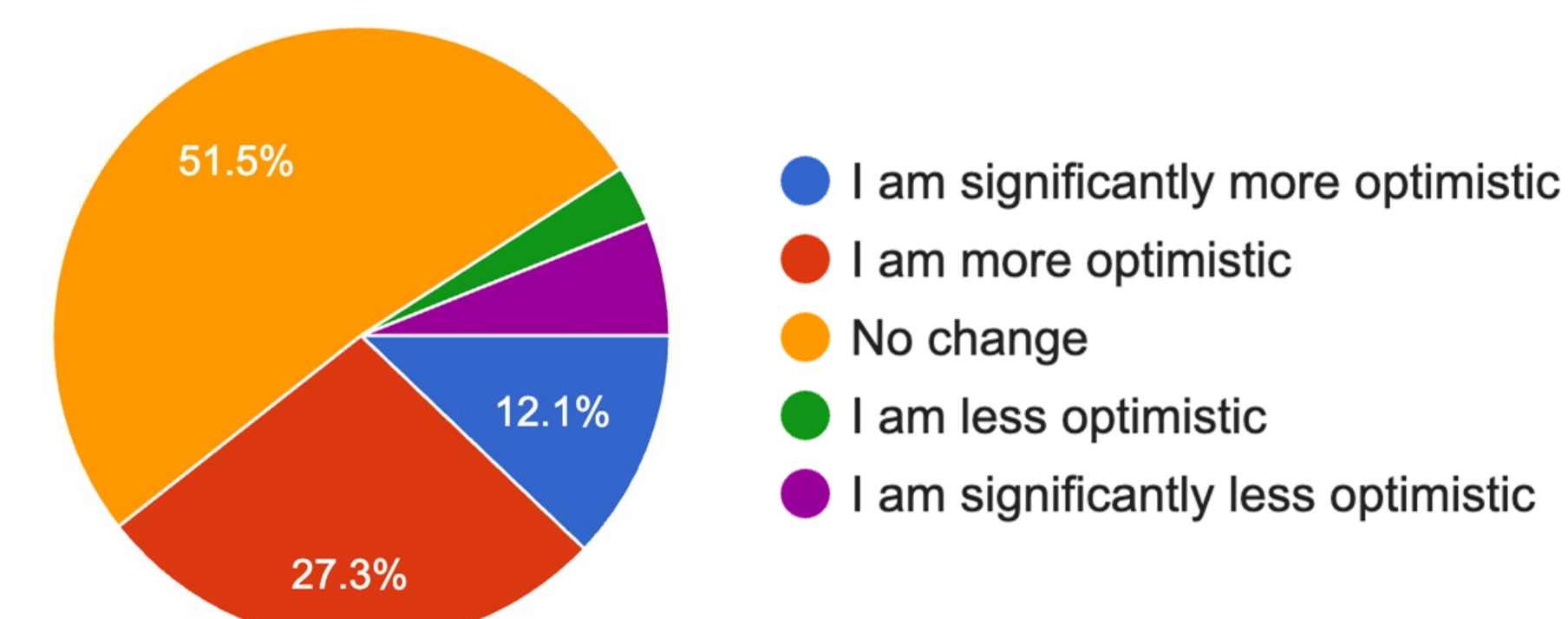


1) Did the online group education session change your optimism as to whether you will manage your symptoms of FND better? (34 responses)

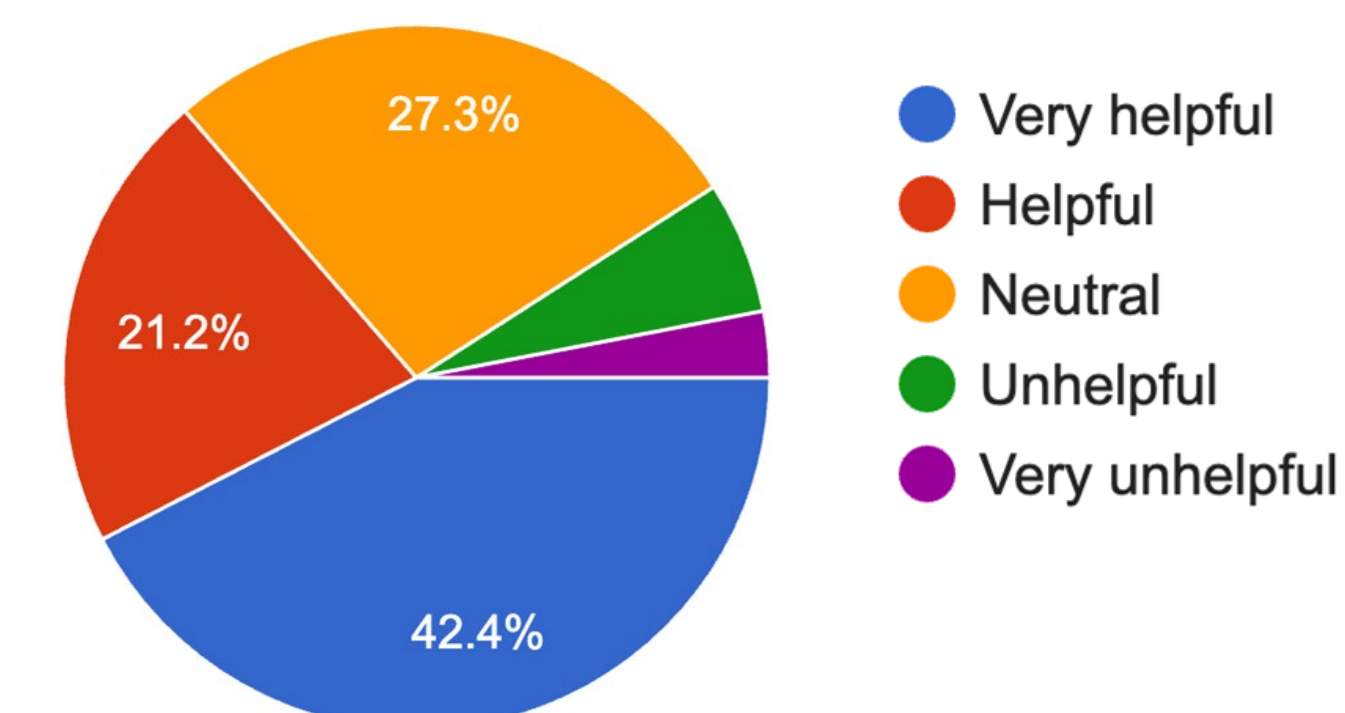


Results

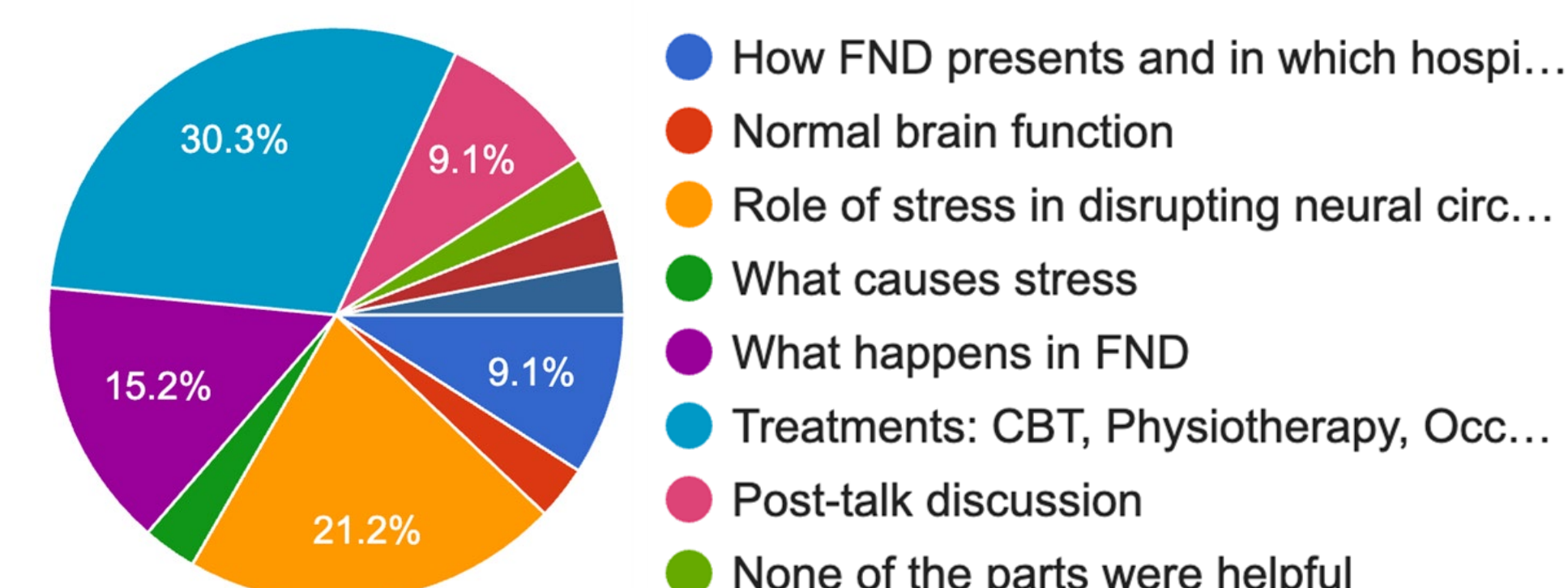
5) Did the online group education session change your optimism as to whether you will recover from FND? (33 responses)



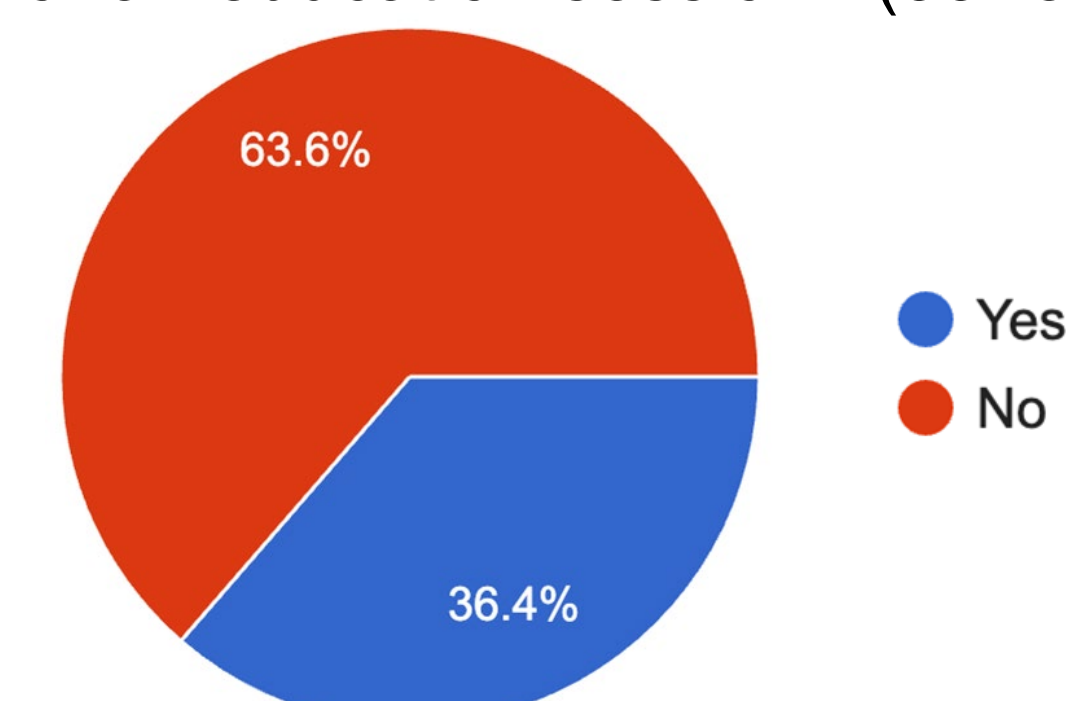
6) Was the online group education session helpful? (33 responses)



7) Which part of the online group education session was the most helpful? (33 responses)

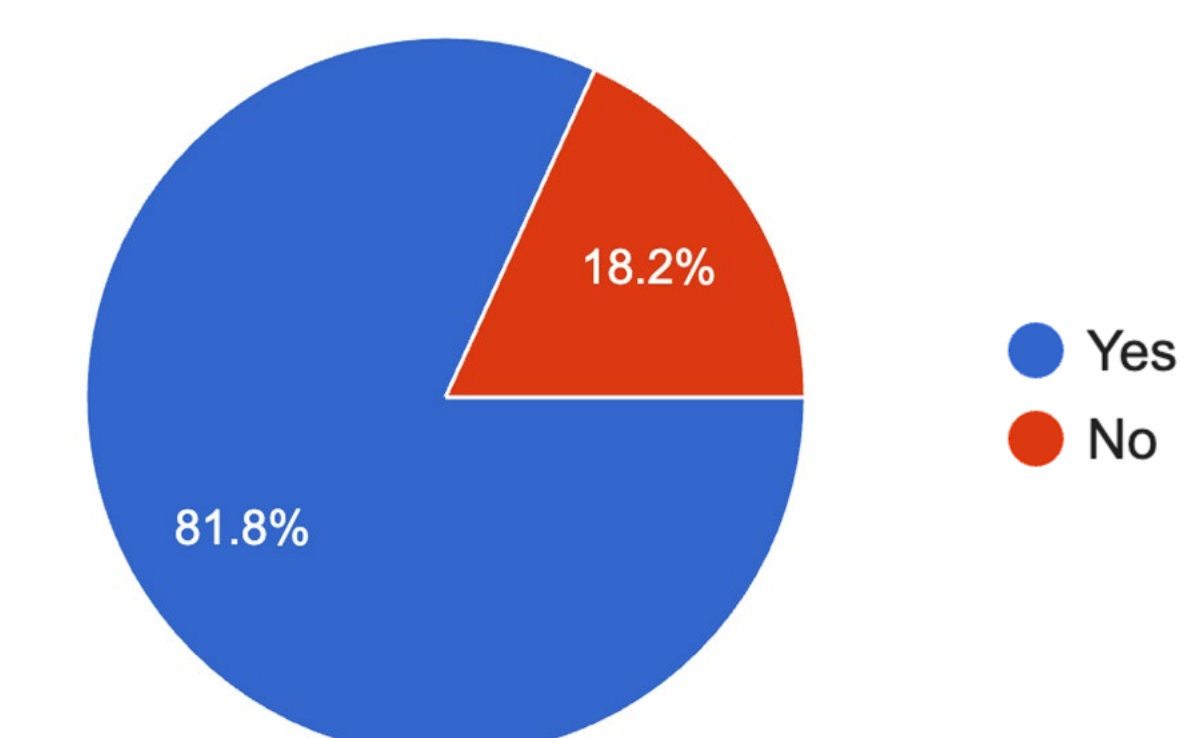


8) Would you have preferred to travel to London for a face-to-face group, rather than attend the online group, for an education session? (33 responses)



Results

9) Would you recommend the online group education session to other individuals with FND? (33 responses)



10) How would you suggest we improve the online group education session? (22 responses)

Themes mentioned include being able to ask questions/participate, individualising the discussion, the length of the session, the level of assumed prior knowledge, and muting participants.

Conclusion

The results of our service evaluation suggest that virtual group psychoeducation is acceptable to patients and useful as a point of entry to treatment for FND. Specifically, it can have a positive impact by promoting an improved understanding of the diagnosis and engagement in treatment.

This service evaluation has implications for clinical service design and delivery. Specifically, it suggests that group psychoeducation is beneficial as an initial step in FND treatment and that the online format of delivery is acceptable and effective.

Acknowledgements

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