

TEACHING COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN SMALL GROUPS WITH SIMULATED CLIENTS: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

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BACKGROUND

Communication skills are essential in veterinary medicine. To improve the veterinary students' communication skills, practical training sessions with simulated clients are seen as the gold standard tool. Students can practice in small groups, give feedback to each other and thus detect their own strengths and points of improvement in a safe environment.

SUMMARY OF WORK

Two training sessions (role-plays with simulated clients) with 3 cases each were organized for fifth-year students in groups of max. 13 participants. The role-play lasted approximately 5 minutes and included common consultations and situations like shared-decision making, emergency, breaking bad news and a difficult customer ("Dr. Google").

Peers, simulated clients and teachers gave individual feedback after each case, based on the Calgary-Cambridge model for communication in health-care. The simulated clients had been prepared in advance. For some cases the simulated clients took their own dogs to the setting to make it more realistic.

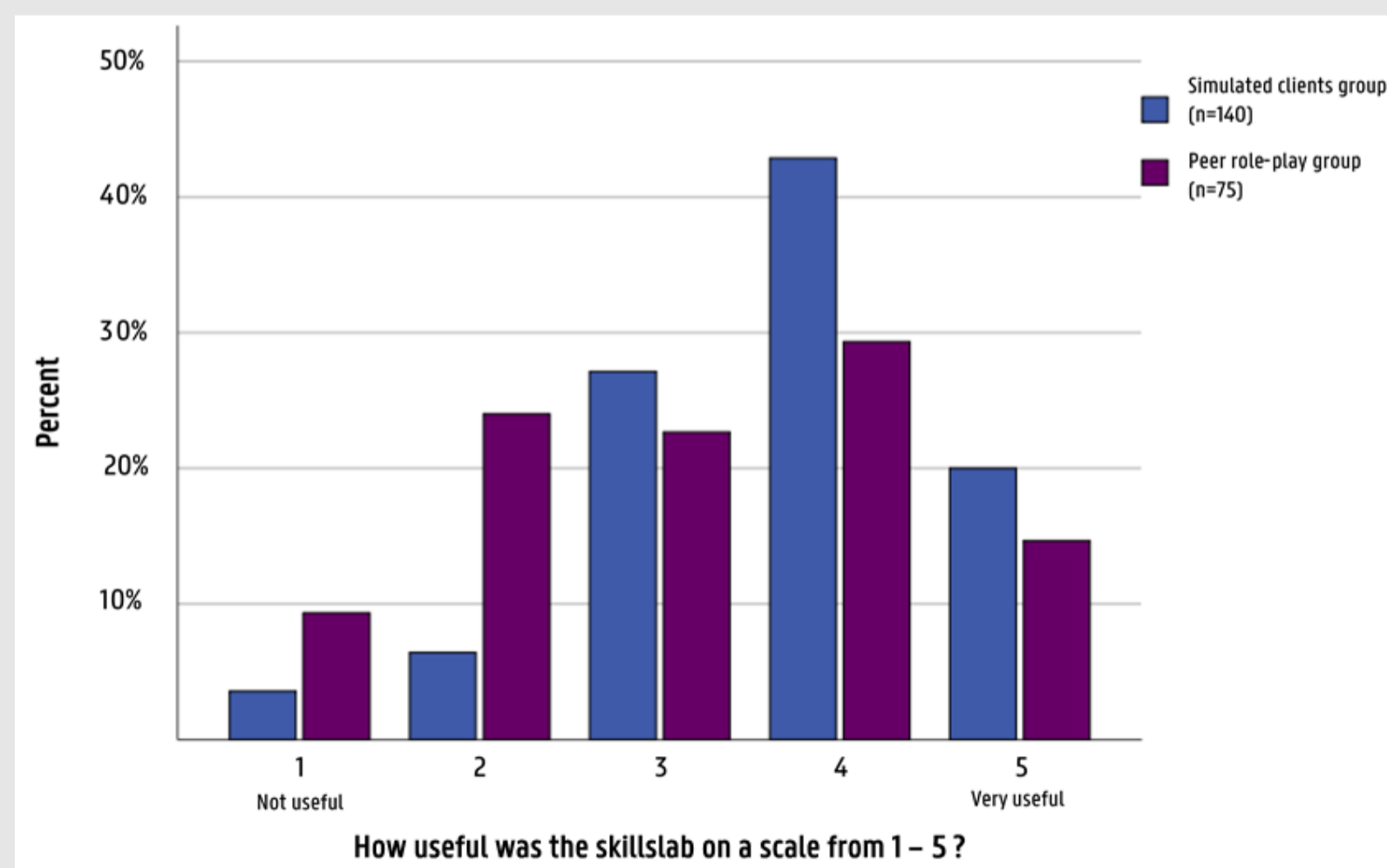


RESULTS

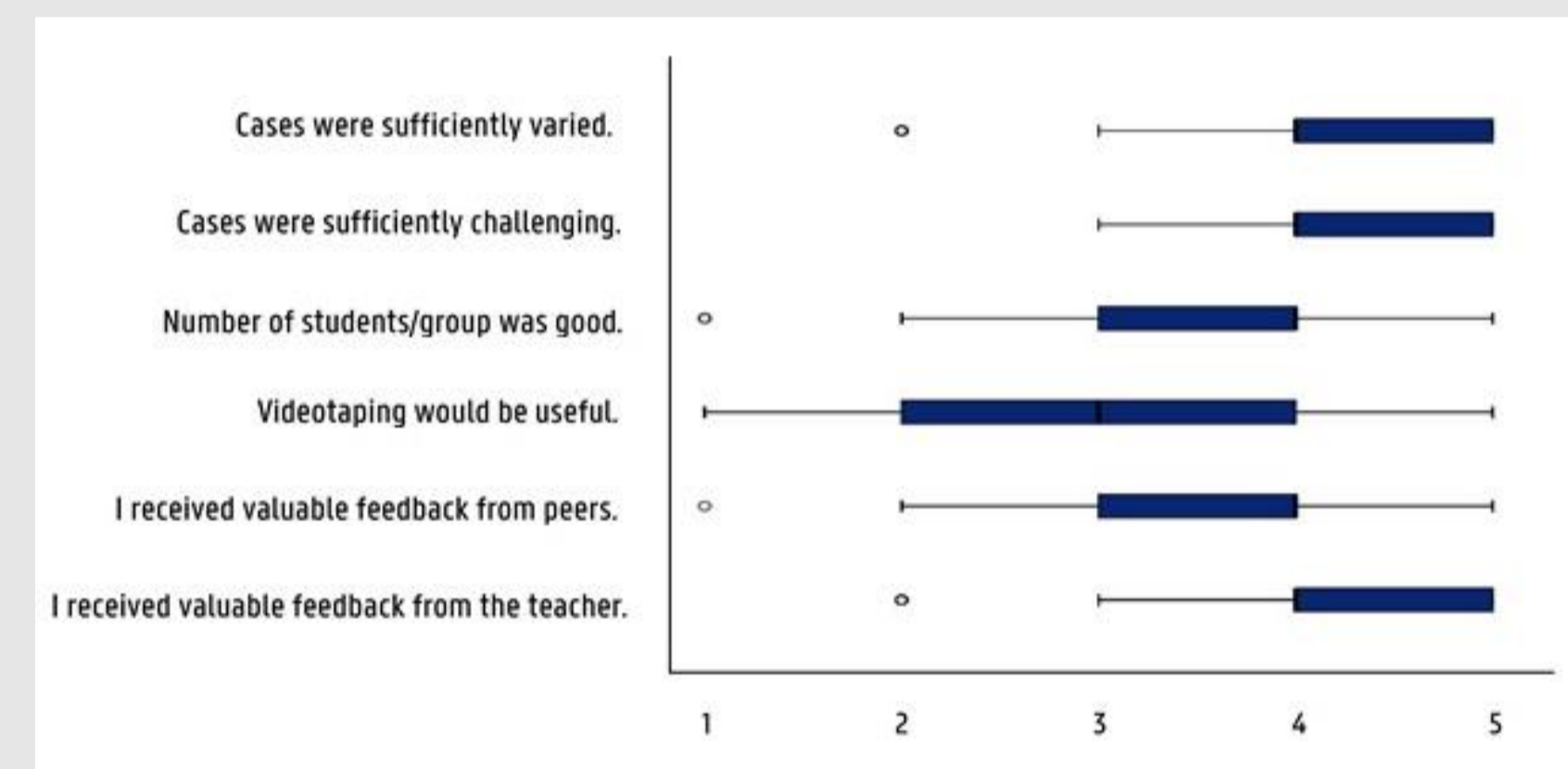
After both sessions 141/271 students (52%) completed a survey with general questions about the training. A 5-point Likert-scale was used.

The previous cohort of fifth year students practiced their skills with role-plays amongst each other. They were also surveyed, with 75/264 students (28%) participating.

The perceived usefulness on a scale of 1 to 5 was higher for sessions with simulated clients compared to peer role-play ($p < 0.001$).



Sessions with simulated clients: students' opinions



Take home message

- Students appreciated training with simulated clients more than peer role-plays
- The feedback of peers and especially teachers was highly appreciated
- Only a minority of students was interested in the use of video-taping

Contact



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