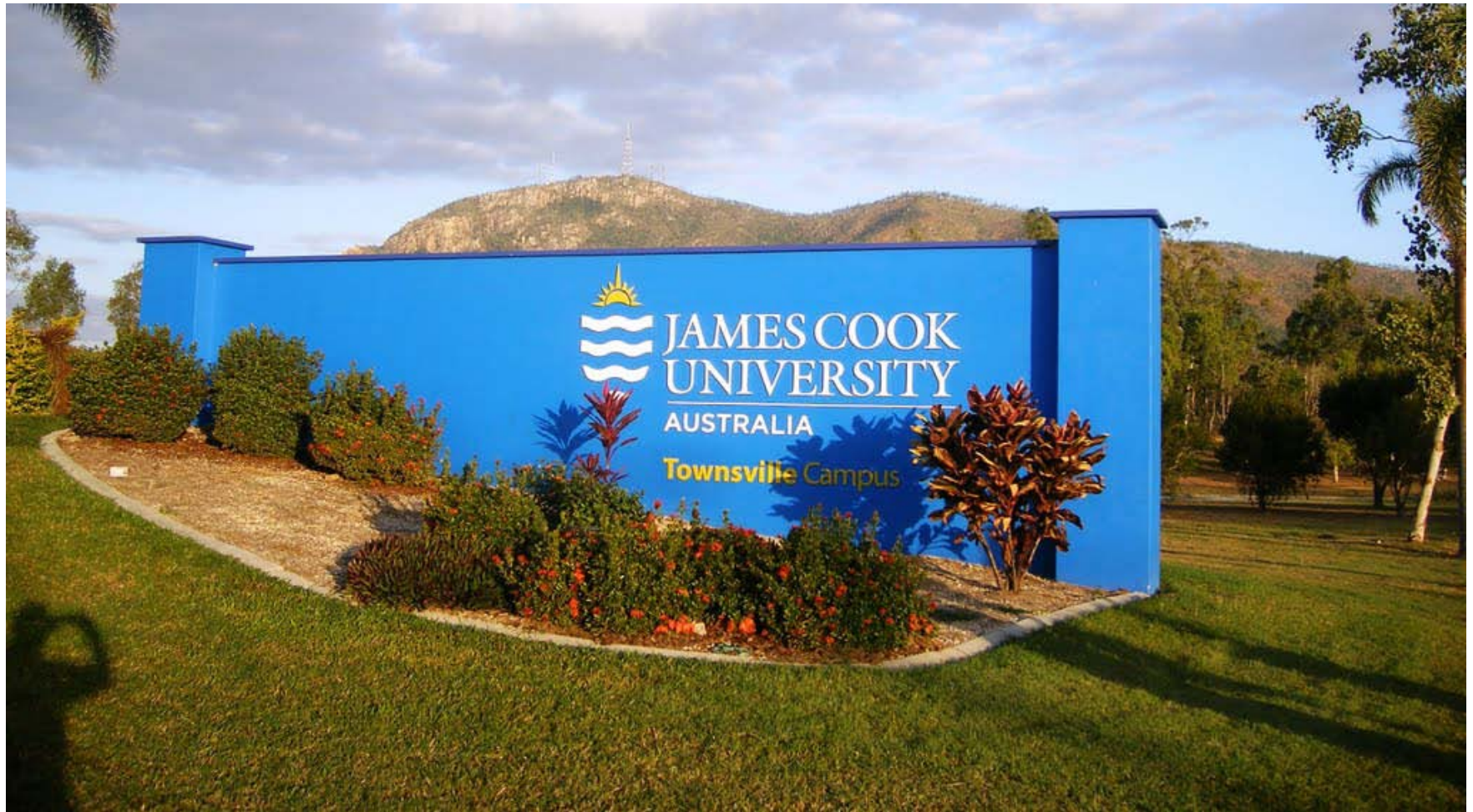

Improving Mental Health Literacy in the University Setting: the role of Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)

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Outline of Presentation

- Introduction to James Cook University
 - Rationale for the project
 - What is MHFA?
 - MHFA in the University
 - Feedback from course participants
 - Unexpected outcomes from the course.
-



James Cook University

- 1970 officially proclaimed a University
- Main campuses Townsville, Cairns, Singapore
- 18,968 students - 74% undergraduate



Rationale for Project

- Evidence that mental health problems in university students have increased
 - First onset before age 24 in 75% cases
 - 68% JCU students aged below 25 years.
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Rationale for Project

- Academic staff lack knowledge of common mental health disorders & interventions
 - Focus on regular first aid:
 - requirement for most medical and allied health students to have current certificate
 - all faculties have a First Aid Officer
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What is MHFA?

- 12-hour course to train people to provide appropriate help to a person developing a mental health problem or in a mental health crisis
 - This help is given until appropriate professional treatment is given or the crisis resolves
 - Explains depression, anxiety disorders, psychosis & substance use disorders.
 - www.mhfa.com.au
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- Attempted to introduce MHFA from ‘top’
 - Lack of support at this level
 - Research needed to provide evidence
 - Immediate change
 - Application of skills
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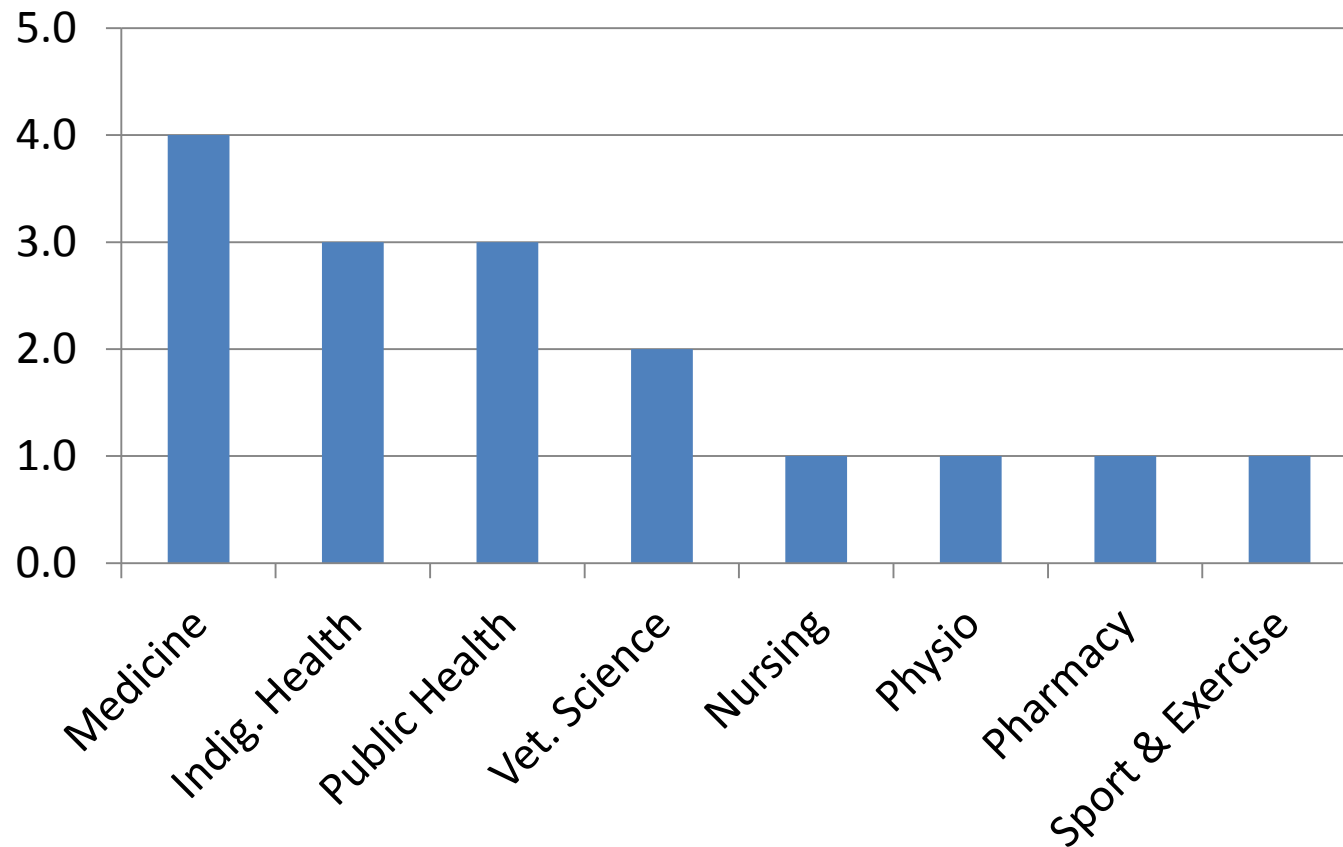
MHFA in the University

- Ethics approval granted
 - Called for EOI from relevant Faculty staff
 - Conducted over two consecutive Saturdays in own time.
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MHFA Participants $n = 16$

- 13 women & 3 men attended
 - 3 Aboriginal & 13 non-Aboriginal
 - 15/16 attended both days
 - 12 academics & 2 admin support
 - 1 researcher & 1 PhD student
 - Mean age 46.1 years
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Disciplines Represented $n = 16$



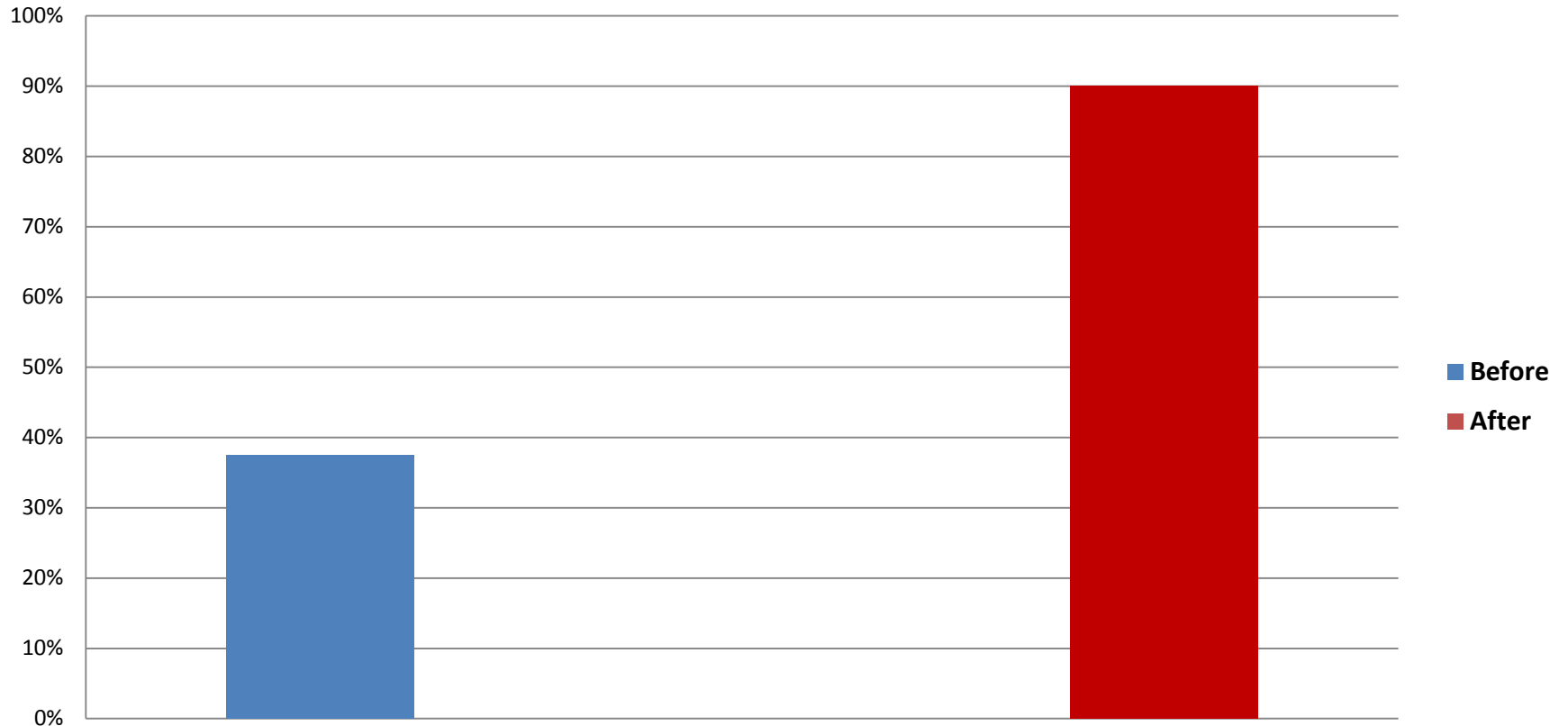
Mental Health Literacy

- ‘Knowledge and beliefs about mental disorders which aid their recognition, management or prevention’ (Jorm et al. 1997)
 - Number of indicators to assess change
 - Pre and post quiz – knowledge & opinions
 - Three month follow up – application
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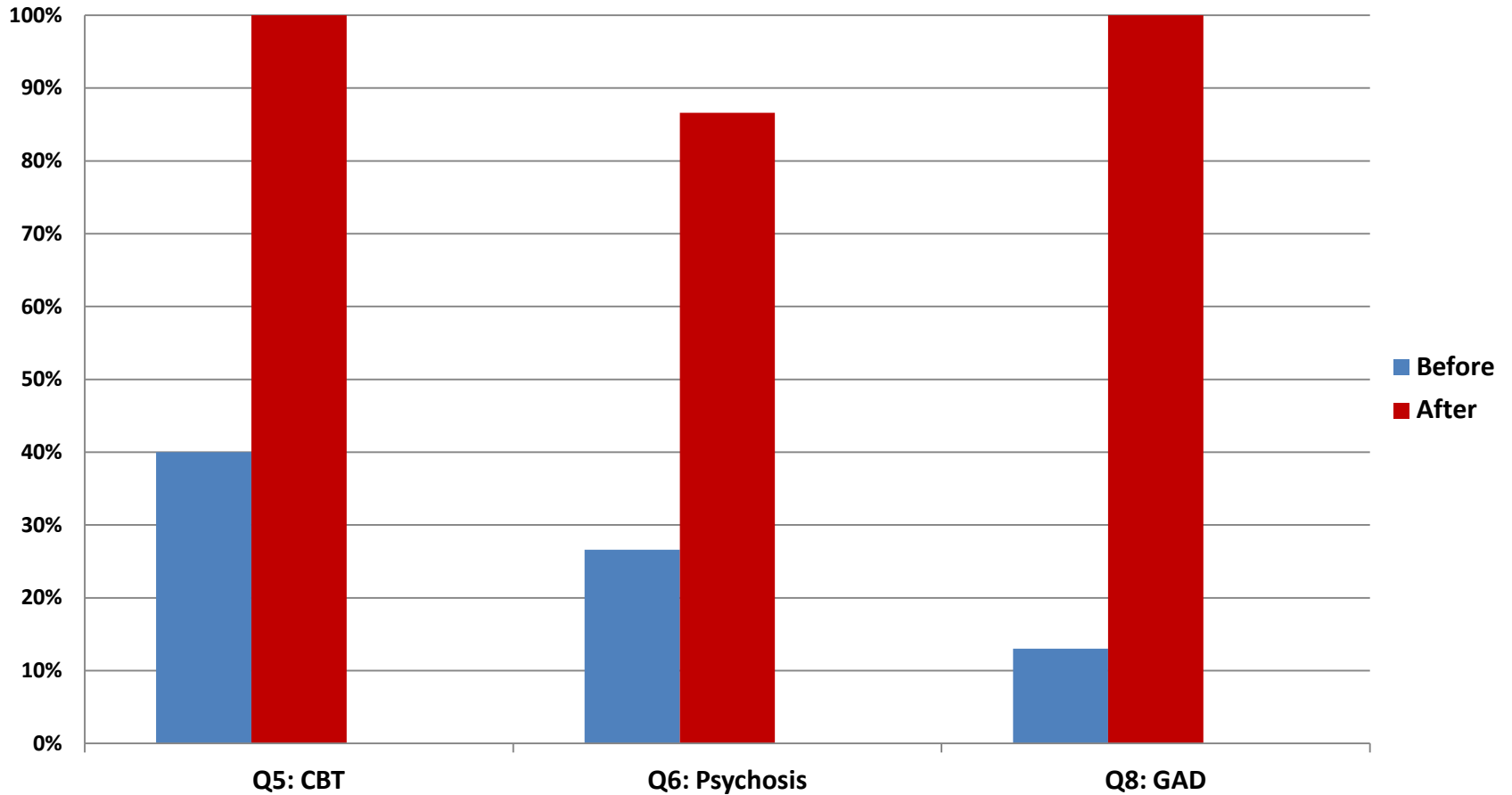
Knowledge Questions

- Eight knowledge questions pre and post
 - Prevalence, definitions, treatments
 - Sixteen opinion based statements
 - Participants asked to agree/disagree/don't know.
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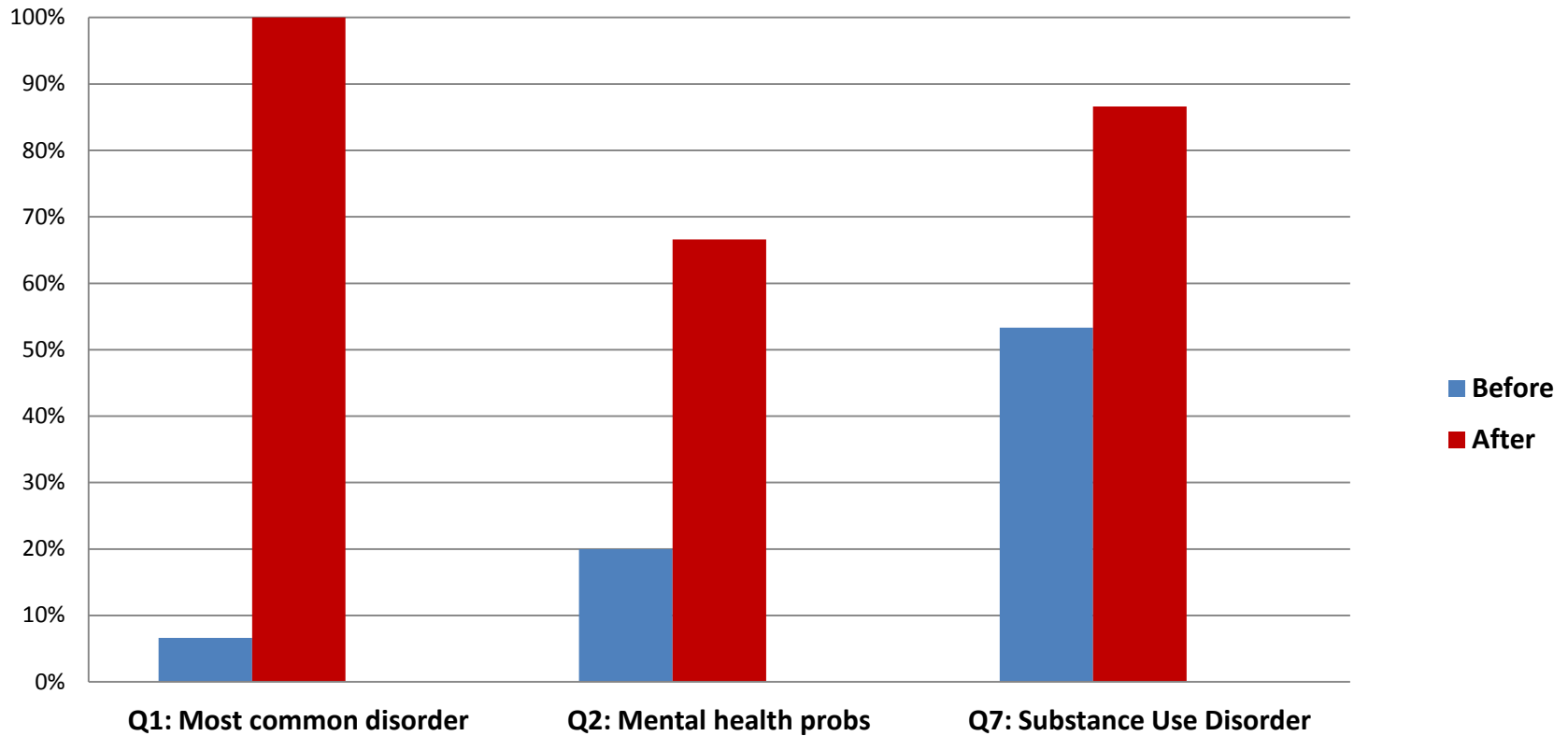
Correct Answers



Definition Questions



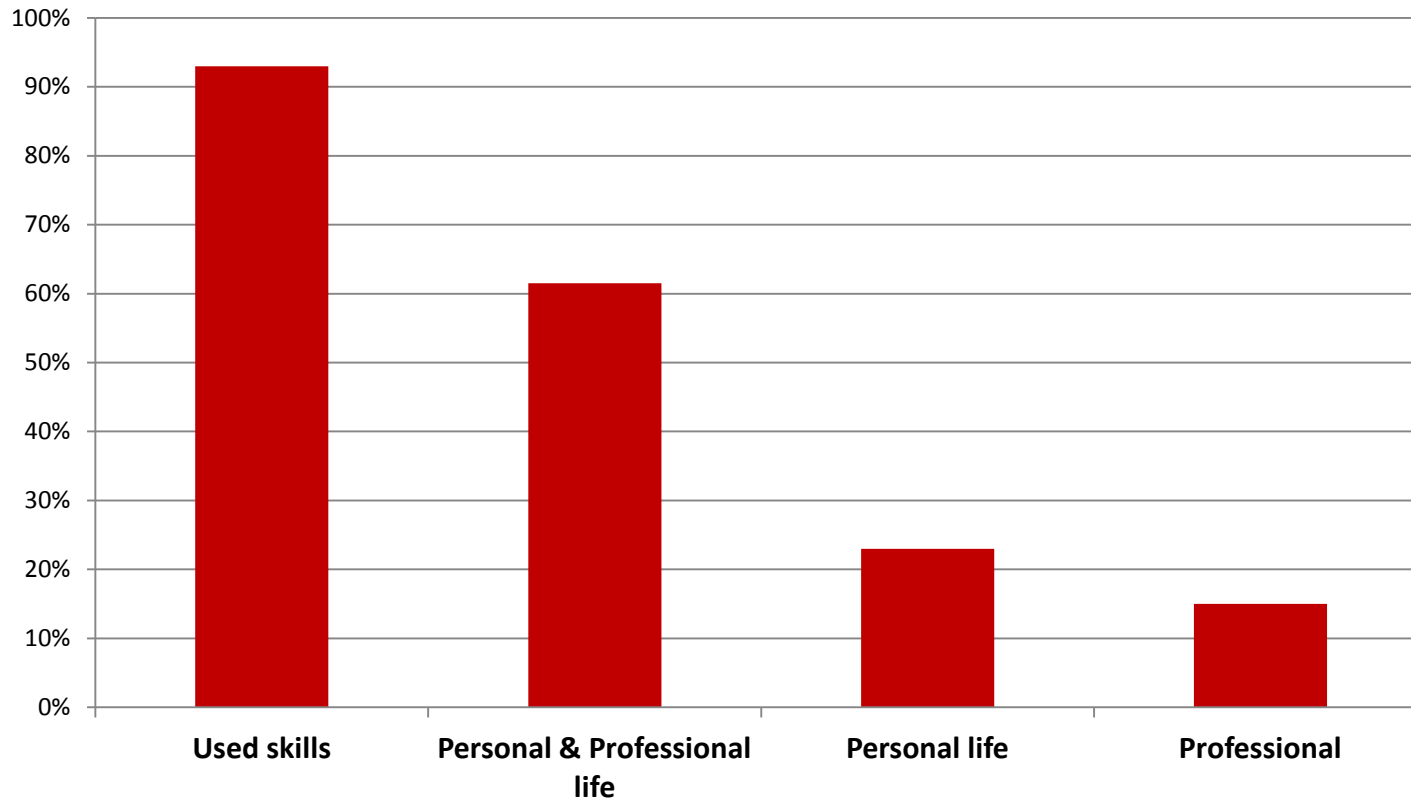
Prevalence Questions



Usefulness and Application

- 14/14 found MHFA useful & all would recommend course to colleagues
 - 12/14 looked at the resources since course
 - 12/14 stated their participation influenced interaction with students &/or staff.
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Application of MHFA Skills



Participant Feedback

I provided the line of questioning about suicide to a friend whose son was experiencing difficulties. He then admitted to wanting to complete suicide.

Professional help was sought and obtained for this young person.

Participant Feedback

I used skills to directly address student issues arising from mental health problems. The course gave me the confidence to do this.

I assisted a friend who was depressed by showing her the course manual.

I listen to people more now instead of giving my opinion.

Participant Feedback

We are often told to keep our bodies safe from injury but nothing seems to be in place for the health of the mind, even though ‘stress leave’ is recognised by workplace health and safety. Many staff at JCU could use the knowledge gained from this course.

- Mental health literacy pre-course was poor
 - Participants were drawn from health faculty
 - Level must be even lower in staff of other faculties
 - Knowledge increased greatly post-course
 - Participants found MHFA valuable
 - The majority used the knowledge within three months.
-

Unexpected Outcomes

- Mental health literacy working group established at JCU
 - Online survey to JCU community – 1554 responses
 - Recommendation to Academic Board for access to MHFA for university community.
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Conclusions

- MHFA an evidence based course that improves mental health literacy
 - Mental health literacy is knowledge linked to actions to benefit one's own mental health or that of others.
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Conclusions

- The pilot trial indicates that MHFA will benefit JCU staff
 - MHFA should be promoted for JCU staff
 - MHFA is an effective way to improve mental health literacy in the workplace.
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- JCU MHFA participants.



