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## Birth Writes:

### Maximising the Effectiveness of Online Perinatal Health Information

#### Background

The role of the internet in providing health information and supporting individuals to take an active role in health-related decision-making has grown dramatically over recent years. Such growth is particularly evident in the field of perinatal health, with myriad online resources providing information on pregnancy, labour, birth and the post-birth period.

The role of the Queensland Centre for Mothers and Babies (QCMB) is to promote the health and well-being of mothers and babies in Queensland. Supporting women and their families to participate actively in decision-making in pregnancy, birth and the post-birth period is important in achieving this goal. The *Having a Baby in Queensland* website, developed by the QCMB, is a core vehicle for supporting and encouraging active decision-making by women and their families. This website provides information about choices before, during and after birth, as well as evidence regarding the risk-benefit profile of alternatives.

This poster outlines the process of developing the *Having a Baby in Queensland* website, summarising techniques for maximising credibility of website content (e.g., by referencing information sources, maximising the currency of information, avoiding the presence of advertising on the website), minimising barriers to website use by different populations (e.g., by ensuring the content meets the informational needs of users, ensuring the readability of the website by different groups) and ensuring effective communication of risk-benefit evidence (e.g., by presenting data in graphical, pictorial and written form; avoiding the use of verbal descriptors such as 'likely' or 'rare' and contextualising risk information).

#### Step 1:

### Analyse Your Audience

- ✓ Understand patterns of internet access in the target population

94.7% of women surveyed 3 months postnatally had access to the internet at home, at work or somewhere else<sup>1</sup>

- ✓ Understand trends in internet use to satisfy health informational needs

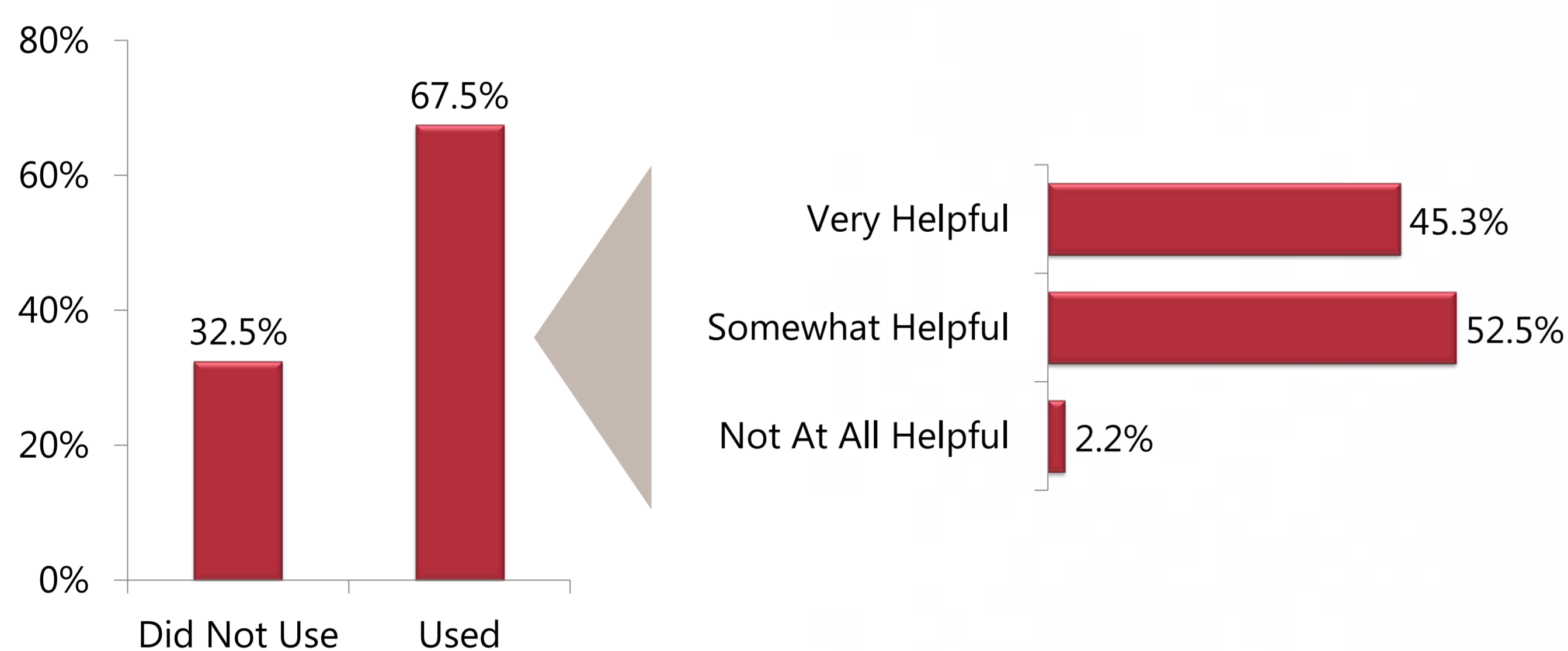


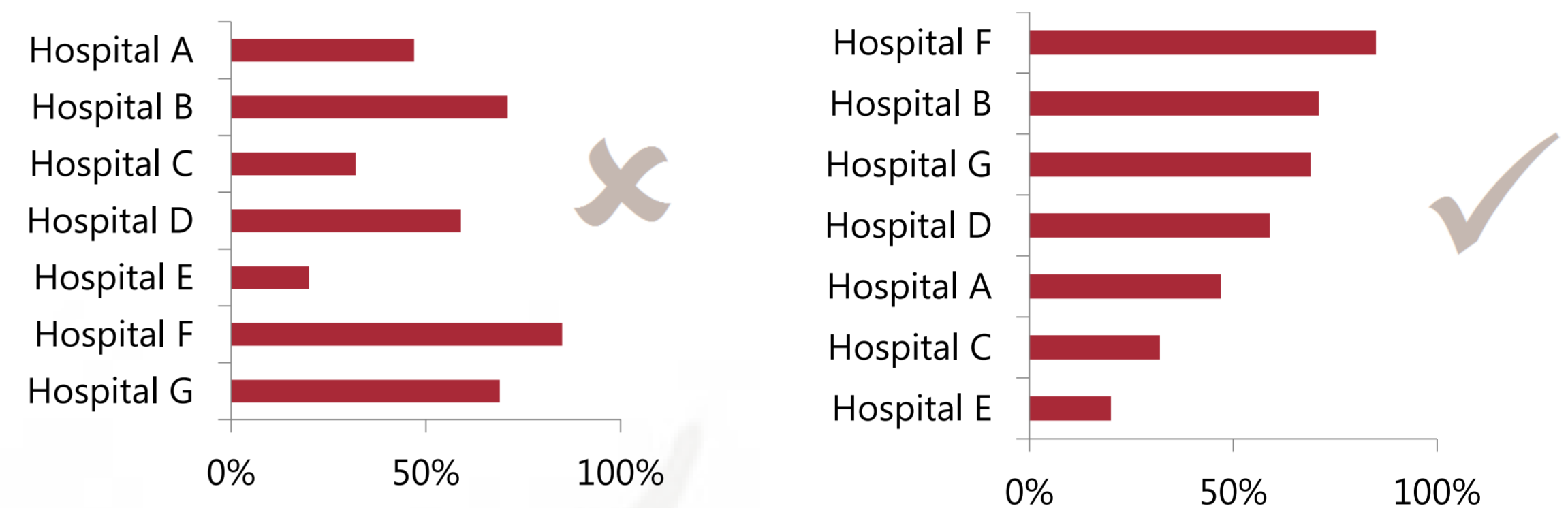
Figure 1. Use of the internet as a source of perinatal information and evaluation of usefulness<sup>1</sup>

- ✓ Identify (and meet) the informational needs of the target population
- ✓ Understand (and address) address barriers to internet use for health information
  - ✗ Fears about potential violations to privacy
  - ✗ Concerns regarding the reliability of information
  - ✗ Difficulty evaluating the quality of information
  - ✗ Concerns regarding physician disapproval

#### Step 3:

### Provide Meaningful Evidence

- ✓ Order options if presenting comparative information

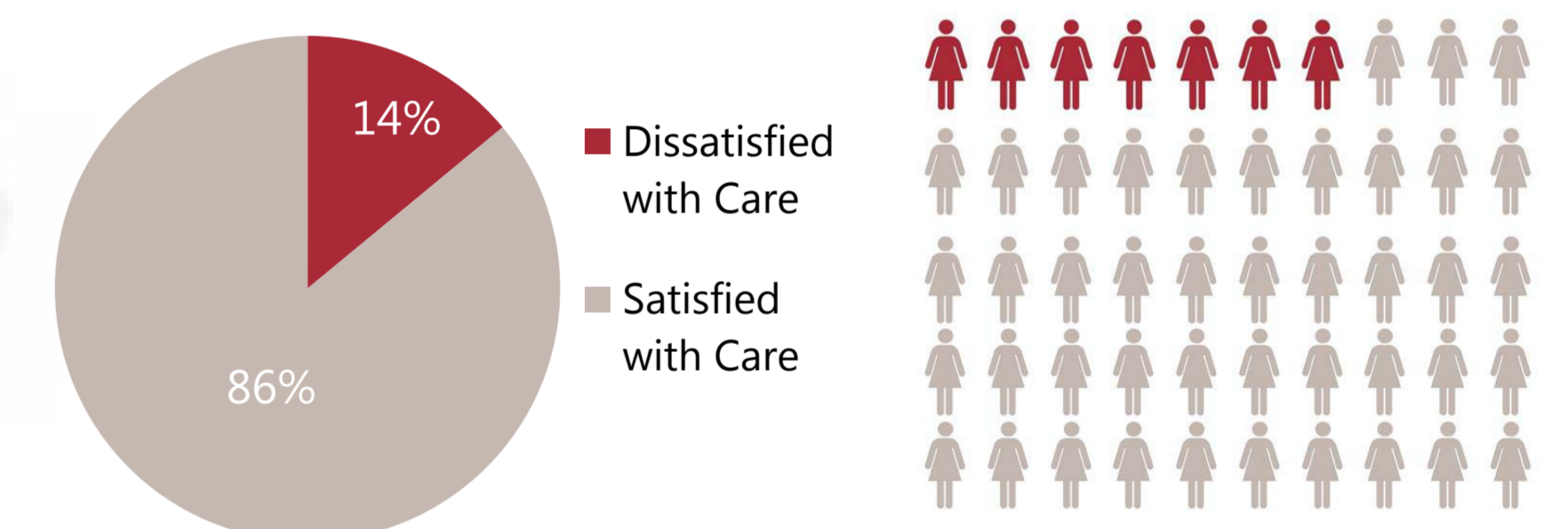


- ✓ Use common metrics if providing assessments (e.g. star ratings \*\*\*)

- ✓ Present statistical data in varied forms: written, graphical and pictorial

14% of the 100 women surveyed reported that they were dissatisfied with the maternity care they received at Hospital A

86% of the 100 women surveyed reported that they were not satisfied with their maternity care at Hospital A



- ✓ When presenting percentage data, report the sample size on which it is based

- ✓ Avoid the use of subjective verbal descriptors such as 'common', 'likely' or 'rare' or relative risk estimates (e.g., 'double the risk')

- ✓ Contextualise risk information and provide tailored risk estimates where possible

#### Step 2:

### Communicate Trustworthiness

Include Structural Features Which Enhance Credibility:

- ✓ Have a reputable organisational sponsor the website
- ✓ Include third party endorsements
- ✓ Publish a privacy policy
- ✓ Include a physical address or telephone number
- ✓ Avoid advertising banners or 'pop up' advertisements
- ✓ Use a 'non profit' domain name (one ending in .edu, .org, or .gov)
- ✓ Ensure links and pages remain functional

Tailor Information to Enhance Credibility:

- ✓ Provide comprehensive information coverage
- ✓ Include statistics (percentages, ratios)
- ✓ Include external references and source citations
- ✓ Identify authorship (name, picture, credentials)
- ✓ Indicate the currency of the information (and ensure it is current)

"This information was compiled by the Queensland Centre for Mothers and Babies and was confirmed by this hospital in December 2009"

<sup>1</sup>Data were collected from 664 women who had a baby in Queensland in 2009 at approximately 3 months post-birth (QCMB, unpublished)