

Ohio Forensic Nurse Examiners: Readiness to Care for Victims of Sexual Assault with Disability

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Introduction

- ADA defines a person with a disability as, “a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a record of such an impairment, or being regarded as having such an impairment” (Brennan, 2013, p. 1)
- Sexual assault occurs every 68 seconds in the United States of America (RAINN, 2022)
- Many hospitals provide patients with a sexual assault response team (SART) that employs trained FNEs to respond to the bedside of victims of sexual assault and provide comprehensive care (RAINN, 2022)
- These FNEs are specially trained registered nurses who conduct a forensic examination and, if required, expert testimony (RAINN, 2022)
- FNEs are registered nurses who typically have two years or more of bedside experience that engage in a didactic sexual assault nurse examiner course and complete a clinical education and preceptorship process following didactic training (IAFN, 2022)
- One of the largest risk factors identified in the United States is living with a disability (NSVRC, 2022)
- This knowledge of the increased victimization of people who live with a disability requires action to ensure adequate care is provided on behalf of FNEs.

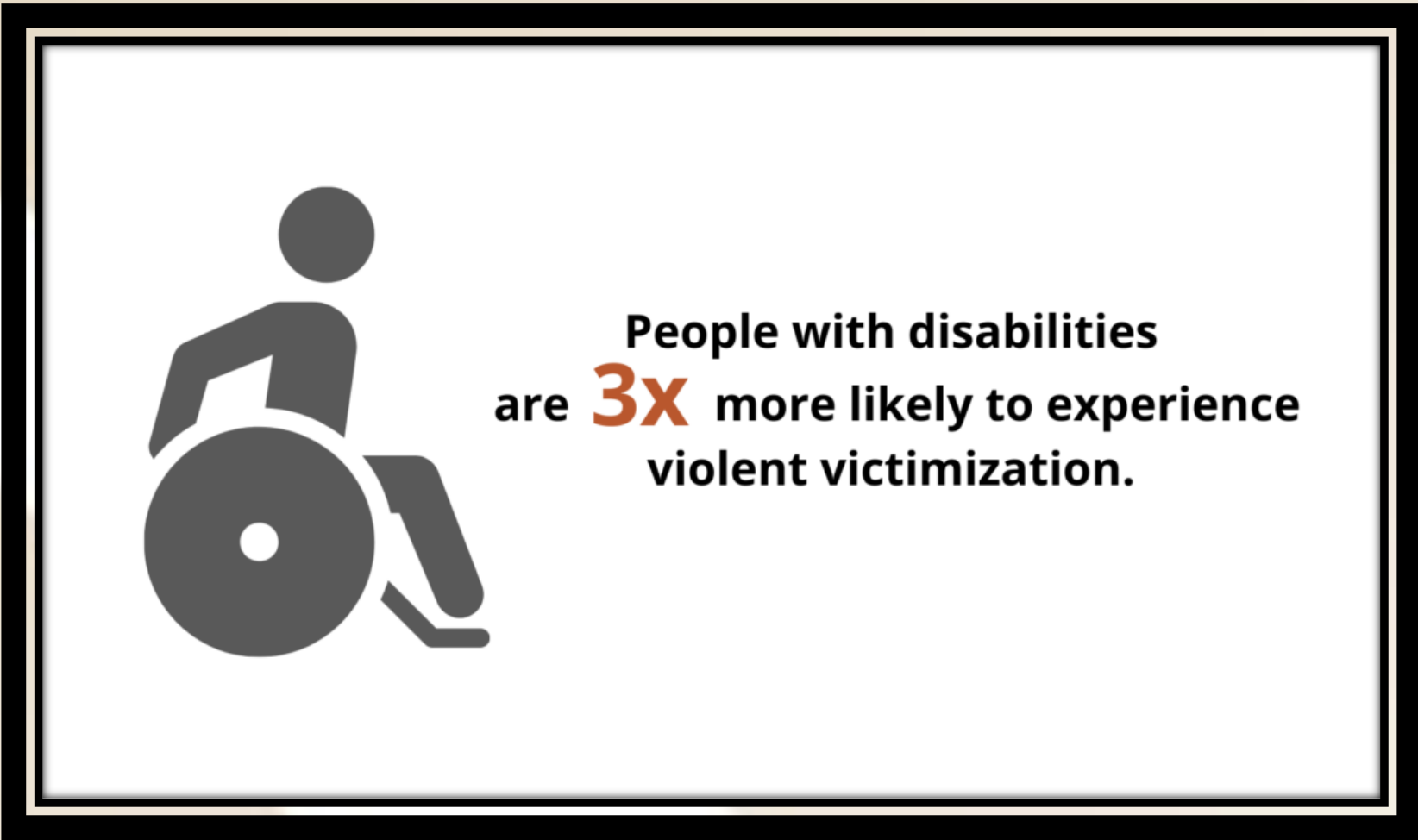


Photo 1: Victimization rates in people with disabilities
Retrieved from <https://www.endabusepwd.org/about-the-movement/the-issue/>

Problem Statement

- The clinical practice problem in this project is that disability-specific training is not a standard of FNE preparation training
- In addition to higher rates of victimization, individuals living with a disability have barriers within the healthcare and legal system (Kahan, 2021)
- Current FNE training is standardized to include treatment of victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, and human trafficking, pharmacology provided for victims of sexual assault, barriers to care, the interprofessional team involved in care, resources for post-assault care, evidence collection and documentation, and working with the criminal justice system (IAFN, 2022)
- With the current statistics and variation in education for new FNEs caring for victims of crime living with a disability, this is an area that requires further investigation

Significance to the Profession

- The most prominently identified effects of sexual violence include post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depressive thoughts, suicidal ideation and/or attempt, and increased likelihood to use drugs (RAINN, 2022)
- These ramifications of sexual violence are more frequently experienced by victims with disabilities (Coston, 2019)
- PTSD is a health condition that causes a person to re-experience trauma, maintain a state of hyperarousal, have emotional dysregulation, and negative self-concept (Lantz, 2020)
- The effect of PTSD over prolonged periods alters neural circuits leading to decreased activation of the prefrontal cortex, changes to the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, increased activity of the amygdala, reduced size of the hippocampus, and hyperactivity of the sympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system (Lantz, 2020)
- These collective changes impact life span, aging, and early disease development (Lantz, 2020)
- Ensuring that victims of sexual assault with disabilities receive comprehensive and informed care from providers will mitigate risk and provide better outcomes for victims of sexual assault with disabilities in all areas of healthcare.

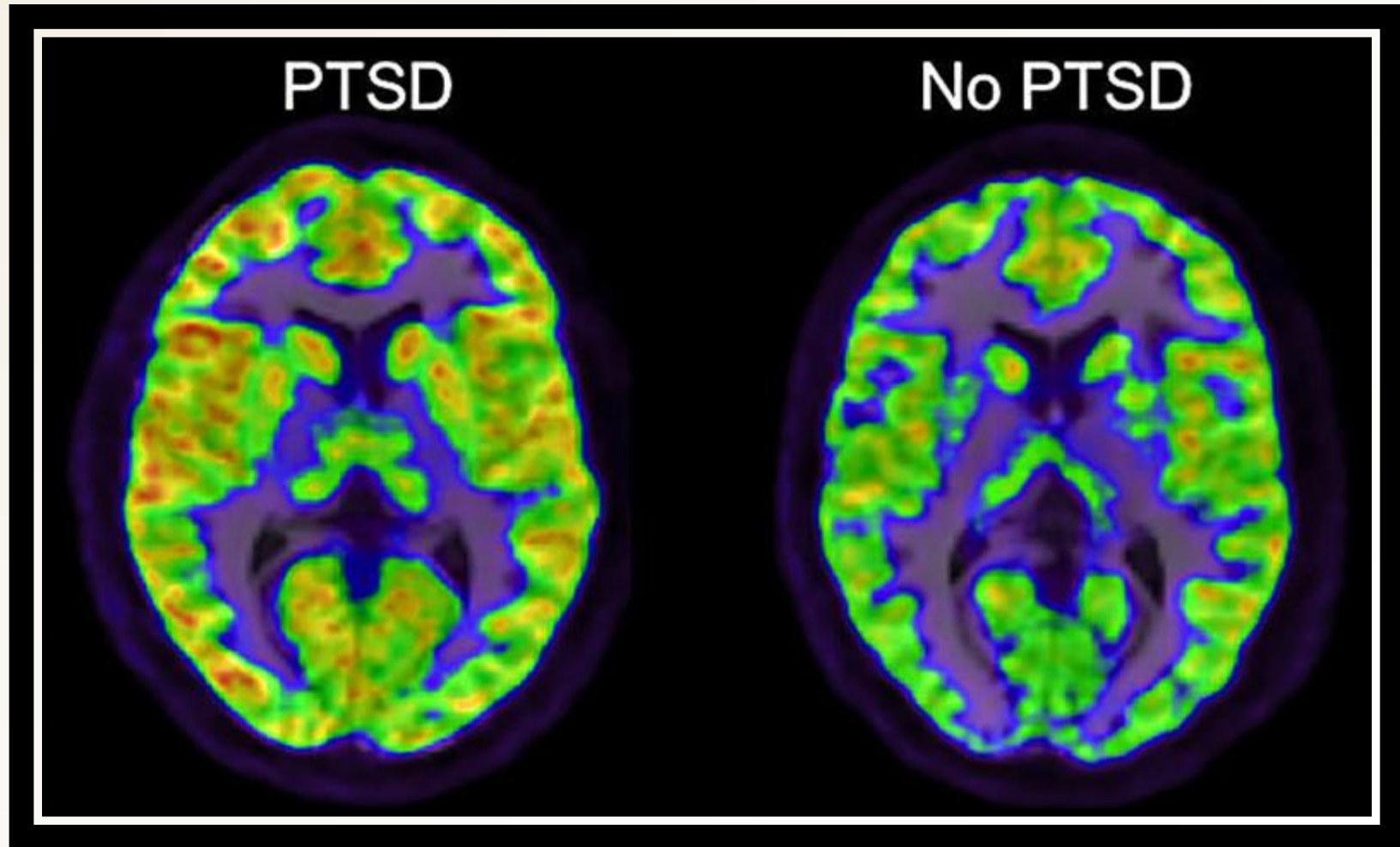


Photo 2: Comparison of neuroimaging of PTSD vs No PTSD
Retrieved from <https://neurosciencenews.com/ptsd-treatments-7108/>

Project Description & Design

- The scholarly project utilized a ten-question qualitative experience survey developed with Otterbein University, AAC, and FNN
- The survey assessed the comfort of caring for victims of sexual assault with disability by comparing whether participants had disability-specific training in their preparation courses
- The participants were encouraged to forward the email to colleagues to utilize the snowball method
- The original email list was every Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) leader in the state
- The survey utilized yes or no, select all that apply, and Likert scale response options
- The survey assessed experience in forensic nursing, comfort in caring for victims of crime with a disability, initial training course material, additional training since becoming an FNE, and use of accommodations in their practice for sexual assault examinations

Outcomes & Evaluation

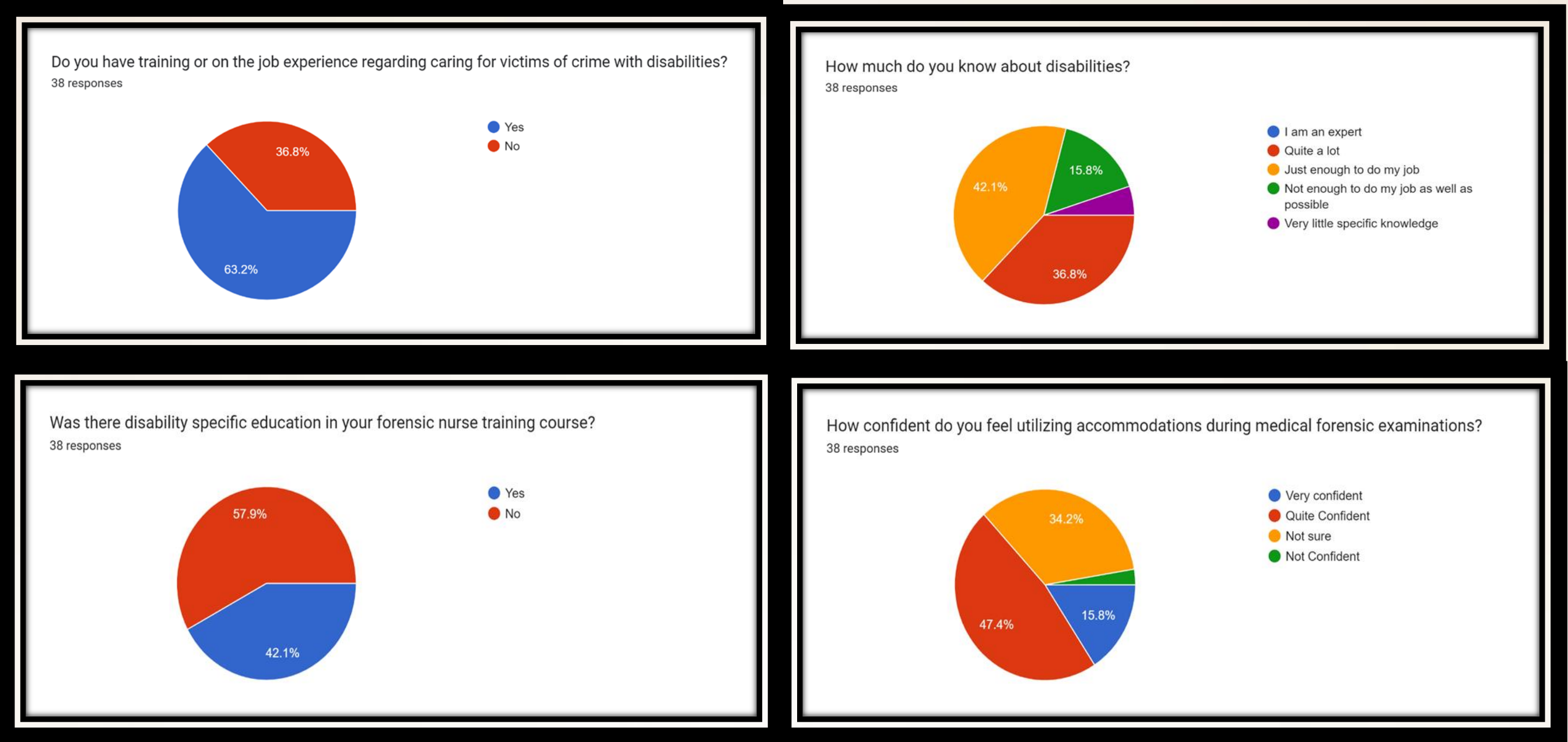


Figure 1: Results of questions 3, 5, 6, and 10 from the survey tool

- A statistically significant correlation was found between if an FNE had disability-specific training in their initial training course and confidence in providing accommodations during medical forensic examinations. The outcome of the Chi-Square Testing for Independence was 7.36 with a p-value of 6.14% (0.06)
- A statistically significant correlation was found between if an FNE had disability-specific training and if they had additional training or on-the-job experience working with individuals with a disability. The outcome of the Chi-Square Testing for Independence was 11.12 with a p-value of 1.11% (0.01)
- 57.9% of respondents had not received disability education in their FNE training
- 36.8% of FNEs did not feel comfortable utilizing accommodations during medical forensic examinations
- 21.1% of respondents did not feel that they knew enough to do their job as well as possible and/or very little specific knowledge

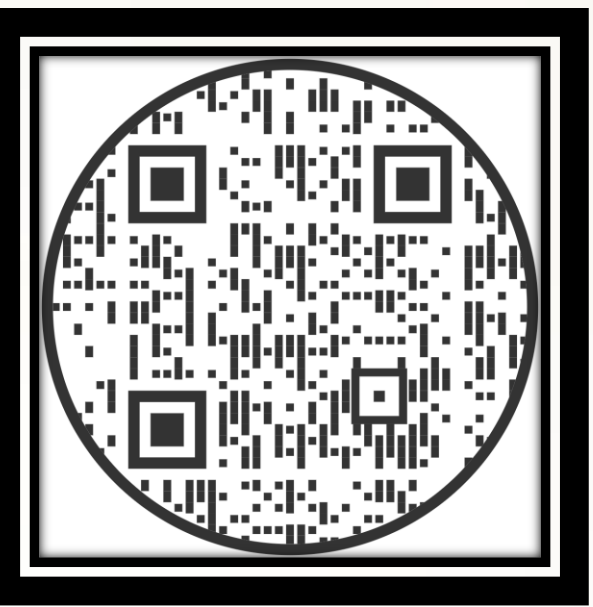
Conclusion

- Findings of the survey tool utilizing for this scholarly project found that more than half of FNEs do not have disability-specific training in their preparation course
- Initial training on care of patient’s living with a disability was found to be a statistically significant indicator of comfort level in utilizing common practice accommodation methods at the bedside during forensic examinations
- The scholarly project had limitations regarding its sample size and distribution that may have impacted results and further research on this topic is suggested

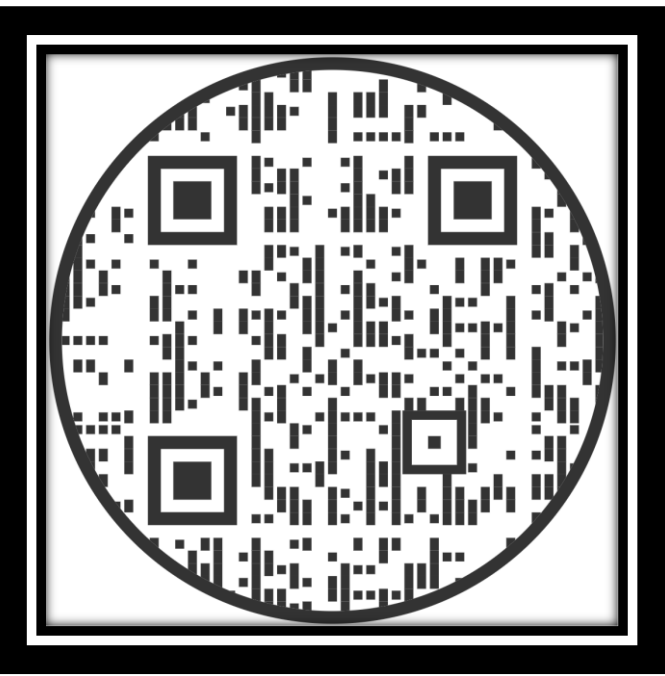
Recommendations

- Due to limitations including a small sample size further research is recommended to determine if findings are replicated in additional surveys with adequate and more evenly distributed respondents
- Based on findings, recommend increasing disability-specific training for FNEs and incorporation into initial training materials

Abstract



Survey Tool, Informed Consent & Results



References

