

# The Impact of Reflective Activities on Multidisciplinary Team Communication



Lauren Guth, PsyD, MEd  
JFK Family Medicine Residency



## Background

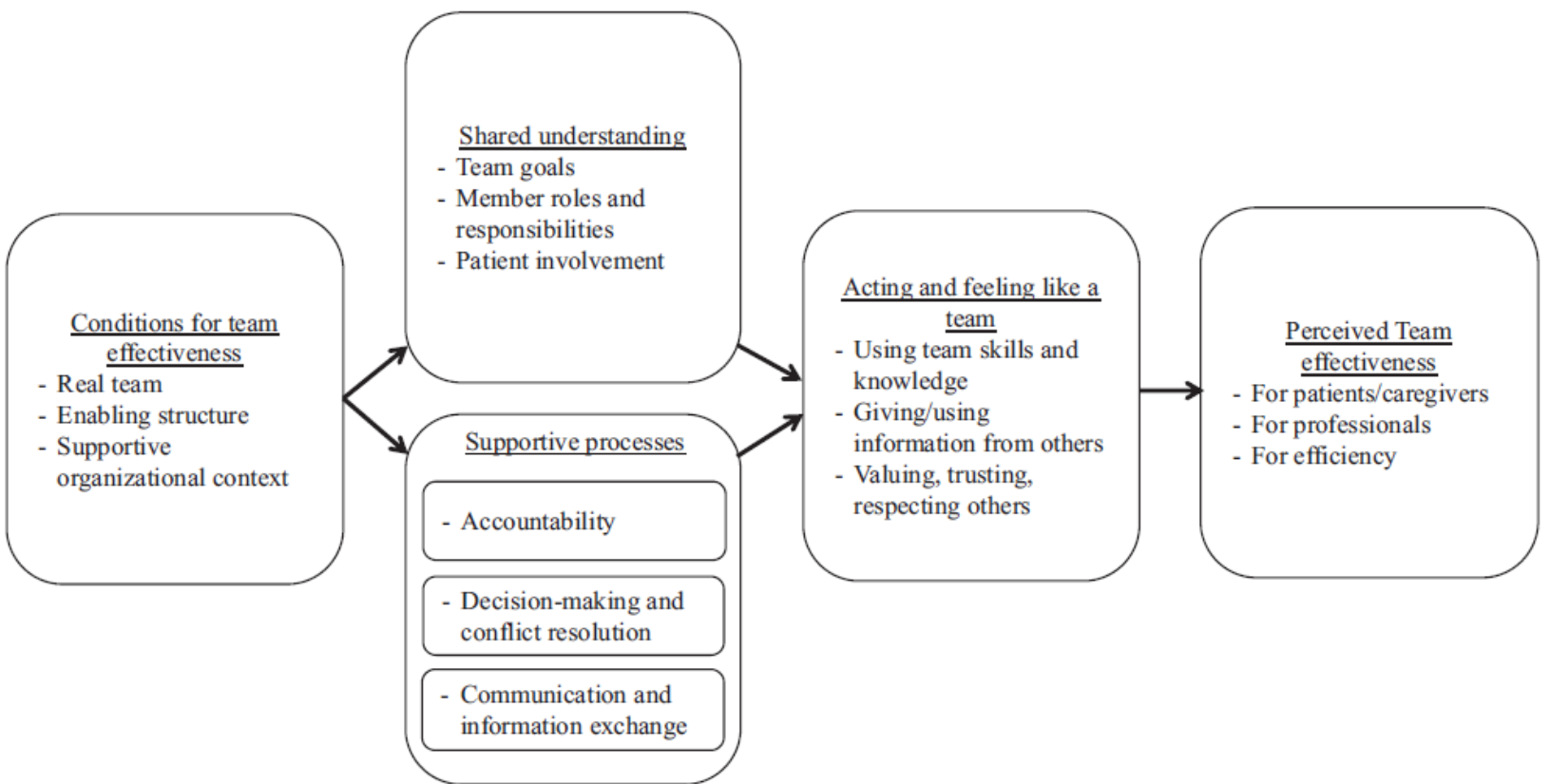
- A team-based approach in Family Medicine (FM) is now essential, as several of the Milestones contain team-based competencies.
- Communication is one of the most important aspects of patient-centered team-based practice.
- Group activities can raise awareness of communication problems, and reflection practices within teams can improve communication.

### Objective

To determine if the implementation of team reflective activities about communication can improve perceived team dynamics within a FM Residency setting.

### Method

- 25 Providers, 14 Nurses/MAs, and 11 Staff Members from 4 multidisciplinary teams participated in 2 types of reflective activities (see below) over 6 months.
- Participants also completed the Primary Care Team Dynamics (PCTD) Survey<sup>1</sup> at the beginning and end of the study. Paired-Samples T-tests were conducted. Below is the conceptual model of the PCTD Survey.



#### Activity #1: Ball Toss Activity<sup>2</sup>

- Team members were tasked with tossing several tennis balls (representing patients) in a repeating pattern across a circle while loud music played.
- Written messages on paper plates (representing paperwork) and water balloons (representing gossip) were circulated during game play.
- Afterward, communication and teamwork challenges were discussed as a group, and participants completed a brief evaluation of the activity.

#### Activity #2: Two Reflection Questions

- At 2 separate meetings, team members wrote individual responses to reflection questions about communication and then discussed them as a group.
- Themes were identified from the written responses.

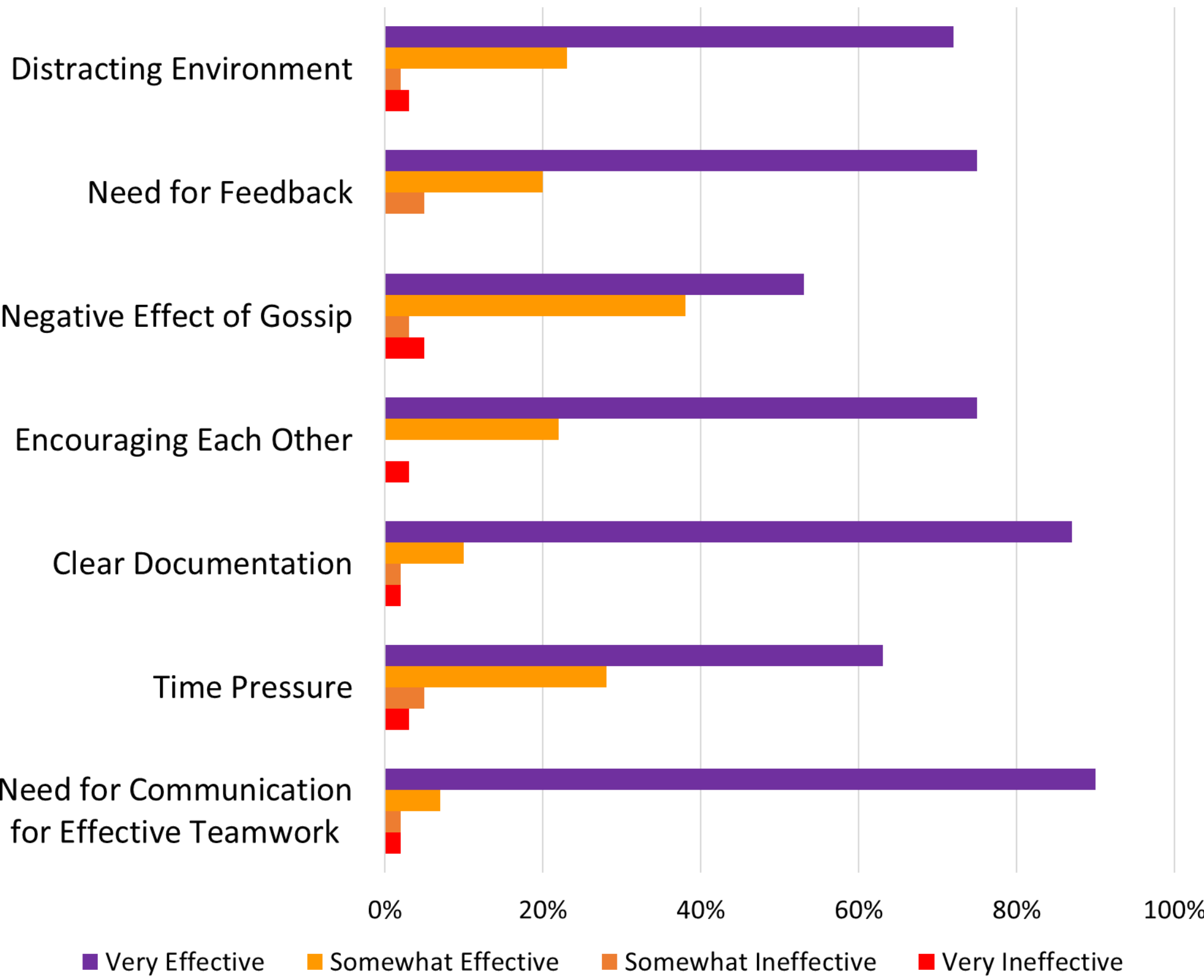
## Results

### Ball Toss Activity Evaluation

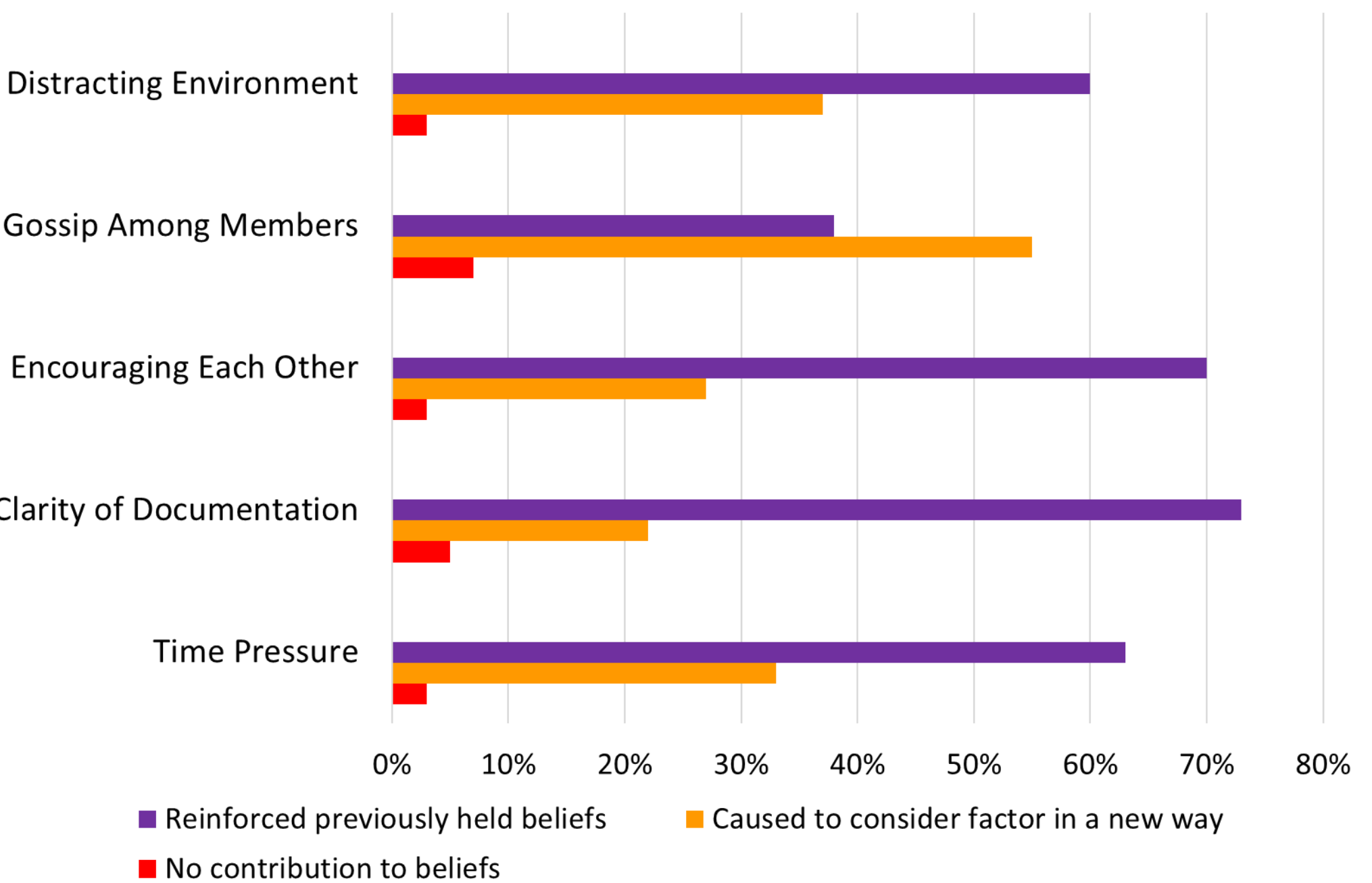


Tossing the "Gossip"

#### Effectiveness of activity at demonstrating Communication Factors



#### Influence on participants' beliefs about the impact of factors on team communication



## Results

### Reflection Question Themes

#### Question 1: What factors are necessary for good communication?

- Willingness to help and listen (approachability)
- Clear communication and articulation
- Non-judgmental feedback using a calm and friendly demeanor/ respectful tone of voice

*"The fact that everyone was respectful of everyone's concerns...the relationship and environment played a big role in making open communication easy."*

#### Question 2: How do you want to improve communication on your team?

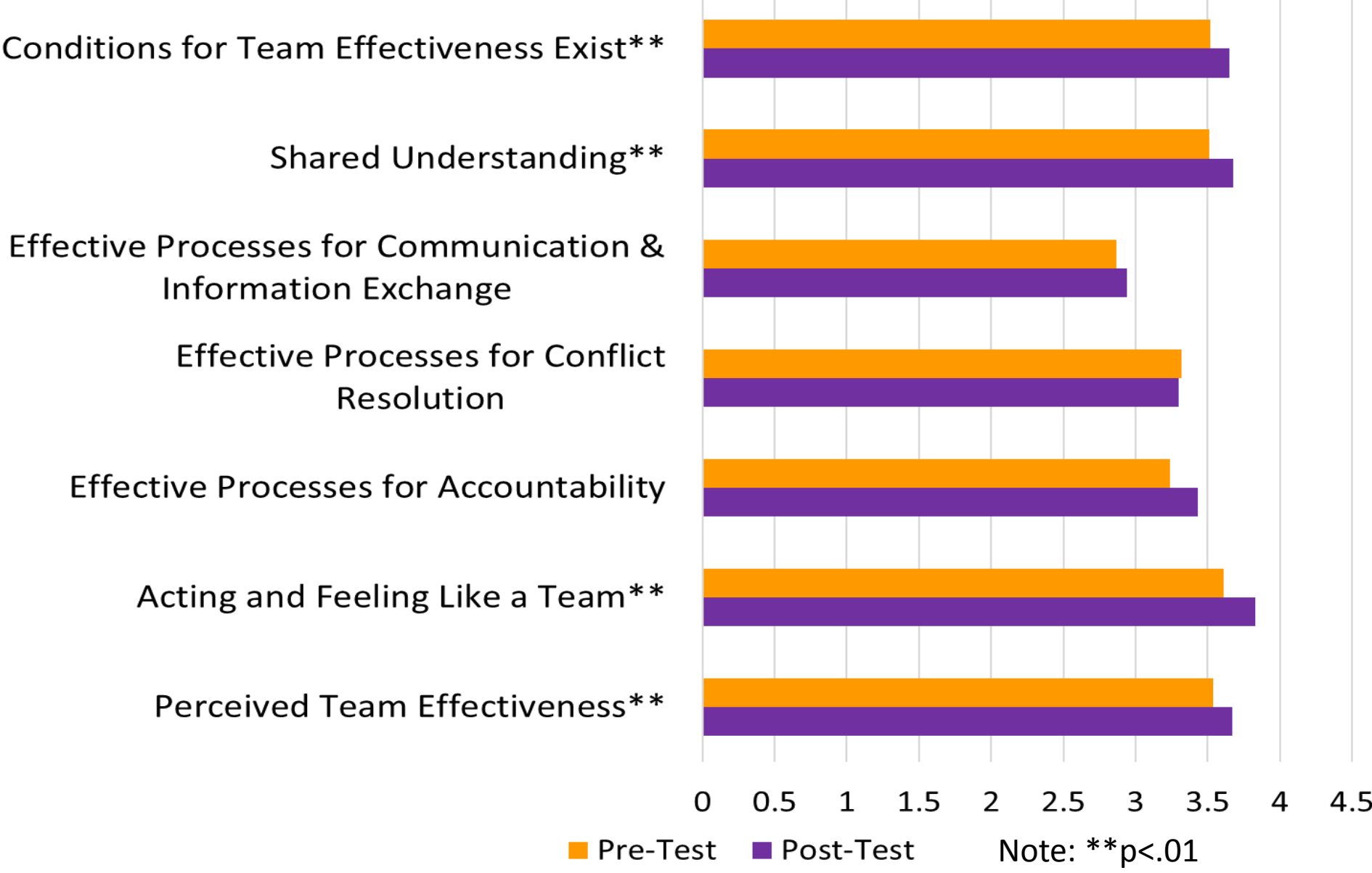
- Focus on improving team efficiency and patient care by giving timely, constructive feedback to team members and discussing issues openly with a positive, growth-oriented mindset.
- Improve transitions of care and work flow by communicating to other team members proactively about patient care needs, potential problems, and asking others what they need.
- Get to know team members better by speaking face-to-face and using team members' names.

*"[Sometimes] I notice errors and I don't take the time to talk to the nurse/MA/ Front Desk about it...so nothing changes. I need to figure out how to take the time to [give feedback] when I see there is an issue."*

## Results

### PCTD Survey

#### Comparison of Pre- and Post-Test Means



## Conclusion

- The *Ball Toss Activity* is effective at demonstrating factors of communication, and it both reinforces participants' beliefs about communication and causes them to consider factors in new ways.
- Reflective activities can improve perception of some factors of team dynamics.
- Approachability of team members and clear communication were identified as necessary factors for good communication on teams.
- To improve communication further, our teams will create processes for conflict resolution and constructive feedback, cultivate proactive mindsets, and create more opportunities for direct, face-to-face communication.



Reading the "paperwork"

### References

- Song, H., Chien, A., Fisher, J., Martin, J., Peters, A., Hacker, K., Rosenthal, M., & Singer, S. (2015). Development and Validation of the Primary Care Team Dynamics Survey. *Health Services Research*, 50, 897-921.
- Guerrero-Pavich, E. (2015). A Resident Retreat Model Using Play to Teach Behavioral Science Milestones. Workshop presented at the 36<sup>th</sup> Forum for Behavioral Science in Family Medicine, Chicago, IL.