

Long term impact of a short course in essentials of palliative care



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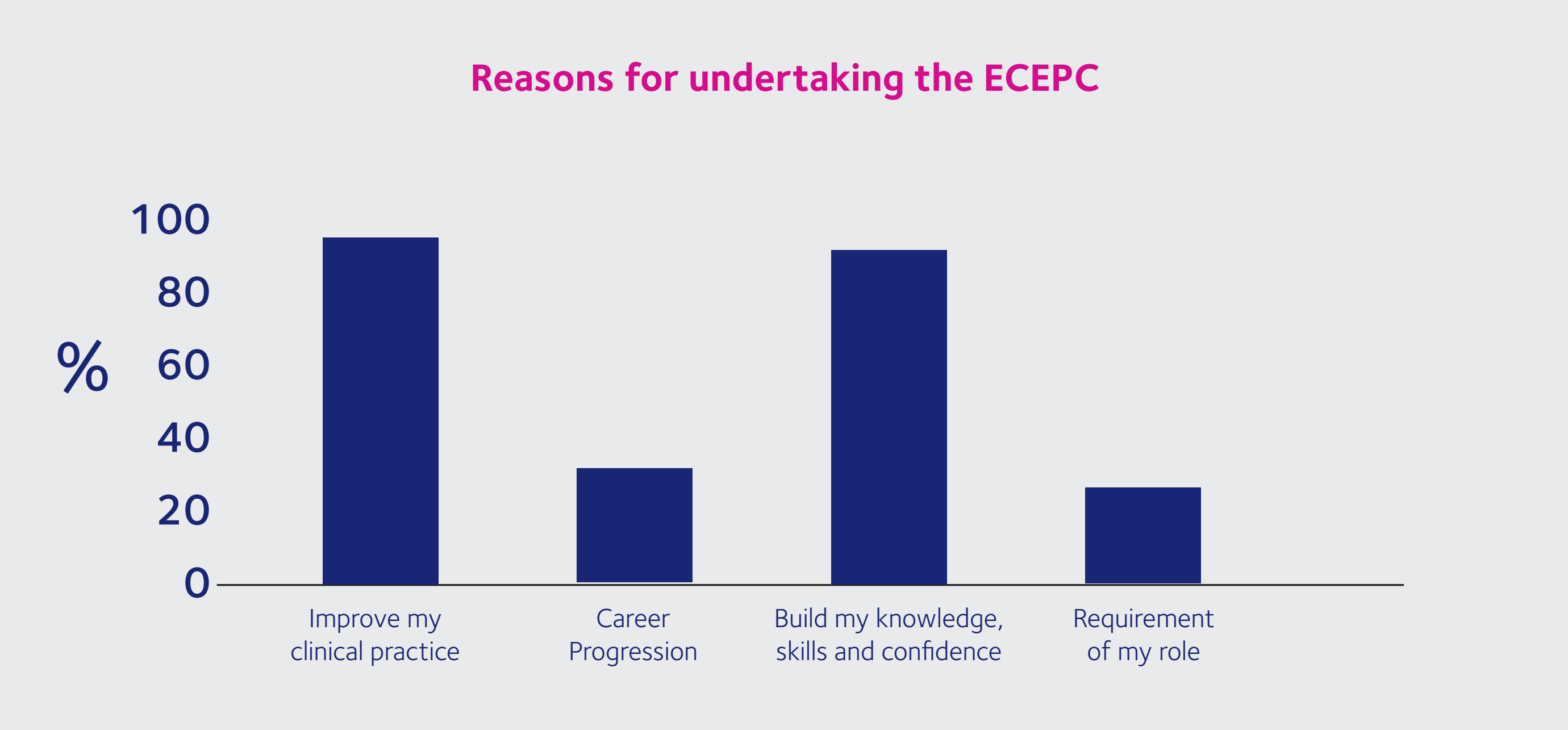
What is the ECEPC?

The European Certificate in Essential Palliative Care (ECEPC) is a widely recognised multi-professional 8-week certificate programme which has trained over 8500 healthcare professionals since 2001. The course is coordinated by Princess Alice Hospice and currently delivered at 15 sites across the UK and beyond. As a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, the course has been modified and is delivered and undertaken remotely allowing much greater flexibility for learners.

Why we performed a survey

The ECEPC team elicit feedback from candidates immediately after the course but we wanted to know what impact the course may be having 6 months post completion.

What we learned



"Incorporating the holistic concept towards managing patient care into my practice enabled (patients) to be supported without the need for medication" (Nurse, hospice)

"Wider choice of symptom control measures than I had access to previously (including non-analgesics)" (Anaesthetist, acute trust)

Topics considered to be the most useful:

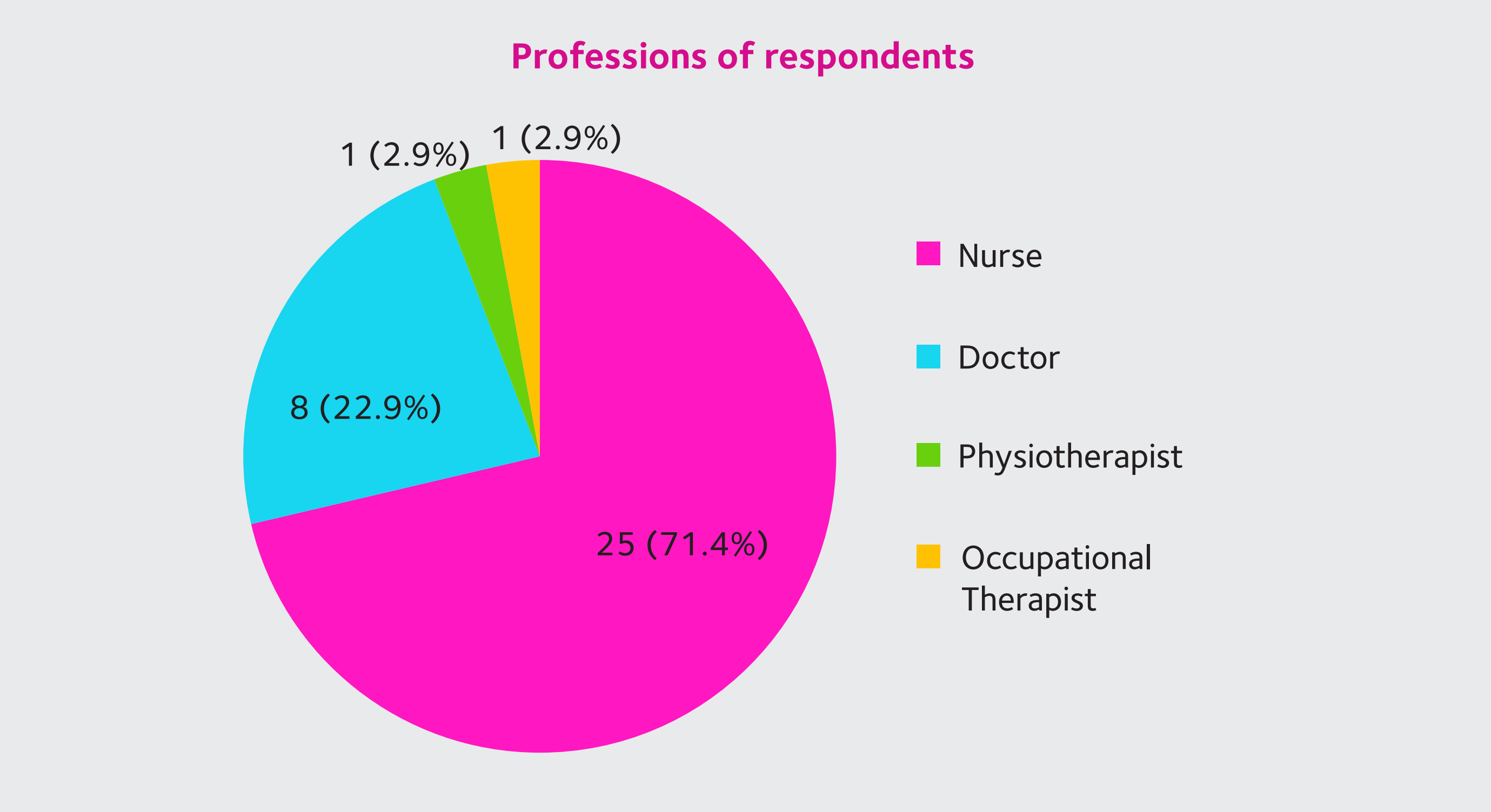
- Learning about holistic care
- The use of end of life medications
- Understanding of symptoms of palliative care patients and how to manage them
- Having the ECEPC handbook as a resource

"...a patient presented with weakness in the legs and mobility issues. I immediately thought spinal cord compression as we had covered it in the course and this turned out to be the case." (Nurse, acute trust)

"I have managed to use some of the techniques to help with breathing that were outlined in the book and then ... request(ed) specifics from the GP as recommended on the course" (Nurse, community)

What we did

Candidates who completed the course in Spring 2021 and Autumn 2021 were invited to participate in an online survey 6 months after completing the course. The anonymous Survey Monkey questionnaire comprised of 13 questions. 35 responses were obtained from 112 invitations sent to candidates who agreed to be contacted (31% response rate). A thematic analysis of free text answers and simple quantitative analysis of tick box and multiple choice questions was performed.



How has undertaking the course influenced practice?

- Sharing new knowledge with colleagues
- Supporting colleagues who are caring for patients at the end of life
- Recommending course to others
- Arranging teaching sessions
- Rewriting palliative care policy (Doctor, Acute Trust)
- Writing a new palliative care SOP (Nurse, Acute Trust)
- Starting a database of patients receiving palliative care (Doctor, Acute Trust)
- Starting a post graduate diploma in Palliative Care (Nurse, Acute Trust)

"...I am now speaking to patients and families much earlier about advance care planning" (Nurse, acute trust)

"Advised a patient regarding uptake of PRN analgesia and pre-movement pain relief before commencing a Physiotherapy session" (Physiotherapist, hospice)

Respondents were unanimous in identifying that undertaking the course improved clinical practice and built skills, knowledge and confidence in end of life care. There was an increased confidence and willingness to share new knowledge with colleagues.

"I had a patient with endometrial cancer... in the community ...I contacted the palliative care physicians and together we arranged for her to start MST with breakthrough oral morphine" (GP trainee)

"Being able to describe a bowel obstruction to my junior colleague and then to the family in understandable language" (Occupational Therapist, community)



What next?

This survey demonstrates the benefits of this established 8-week home-study programme and its value as a stepping stone to career progression. It offers evidence as to how the course can impact practice and how it can be further developed and refined. Whilst a small survey, the data reiterates the importance of a short accessible course equipping Healthcare Professionals to offer the best quality care regardless of their profession or healthcare setting. The ECEPC team will continue to collect feedback from candidates at the end of their course and 6 months post completion.



Scan the QR code for more information

