



ACP CRIO

Advance Care Planning Collaborative Research & Innovation Opportunities Network

Advance Care Planning in Alberta Lawyers' Practices: A Cross-Sectional Survey of Alberta Lawyers

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BACKGROUND

- The medical and legal fields coalesce around **advance care planning (ACP)**, a process of reflection on and communication of a person's future healthcare preferences
- Traditionally, lawyers' role in ACP has been limited to completion of a **Personal Directive (PD)**, the written legal document which appoints an agent for health care decision making
- Virtually no research engages with the legal profession to understand lawyers' attitudes, beliefs and practices in this important area

OBJECTIVE

To survey Alberta lawyers who practice Wills & Estates Planning law to learn about:

- ACP in their practices
- Barriers** and facilitators to assisting clients with ACP
- Resources** and practice changes which may address barriers

WHY LAWYERS?

- Sick, older patients in Canada are *as likely* to have spoken with a lawyer as with a family doctor (30%) about end of life care (Heyland et al, JAMA Internal Medicine 2013; 173(9): 778)
- 47% of Saskatchewanans polled said lawyers were source of assistance in preparing ACP document, while only 5% said physicians (Goodridge et al., ISRN Family Medicine 2013; 2013:483673)

METHODS

- Multi-disciplinary collaborative process** involving the Canadian Bar Association (CBA) (Wills, Estates & Trusts, Elder and Health Law Sections), Legal Education Society, lawyers from private practice, legal assistance, Alberta Health Services, Covenant Health and Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee, clinicians, patient advisors and medical ethicists.
- Survey mapped to Michie et al. theoretical domains framework (TDF), which describes 14 domains of health care provider behaviour that can influence the utilization of health policies, where domains relevant to legal practice. (Michie et al., Qual Saf Health Care 2005; 14:26-33)
- On-line, anonymous survey**

15 questions

- Promoted for four months to practicing lawyers by legal professional organizations through email, websites, e-newsletters and **social media**.

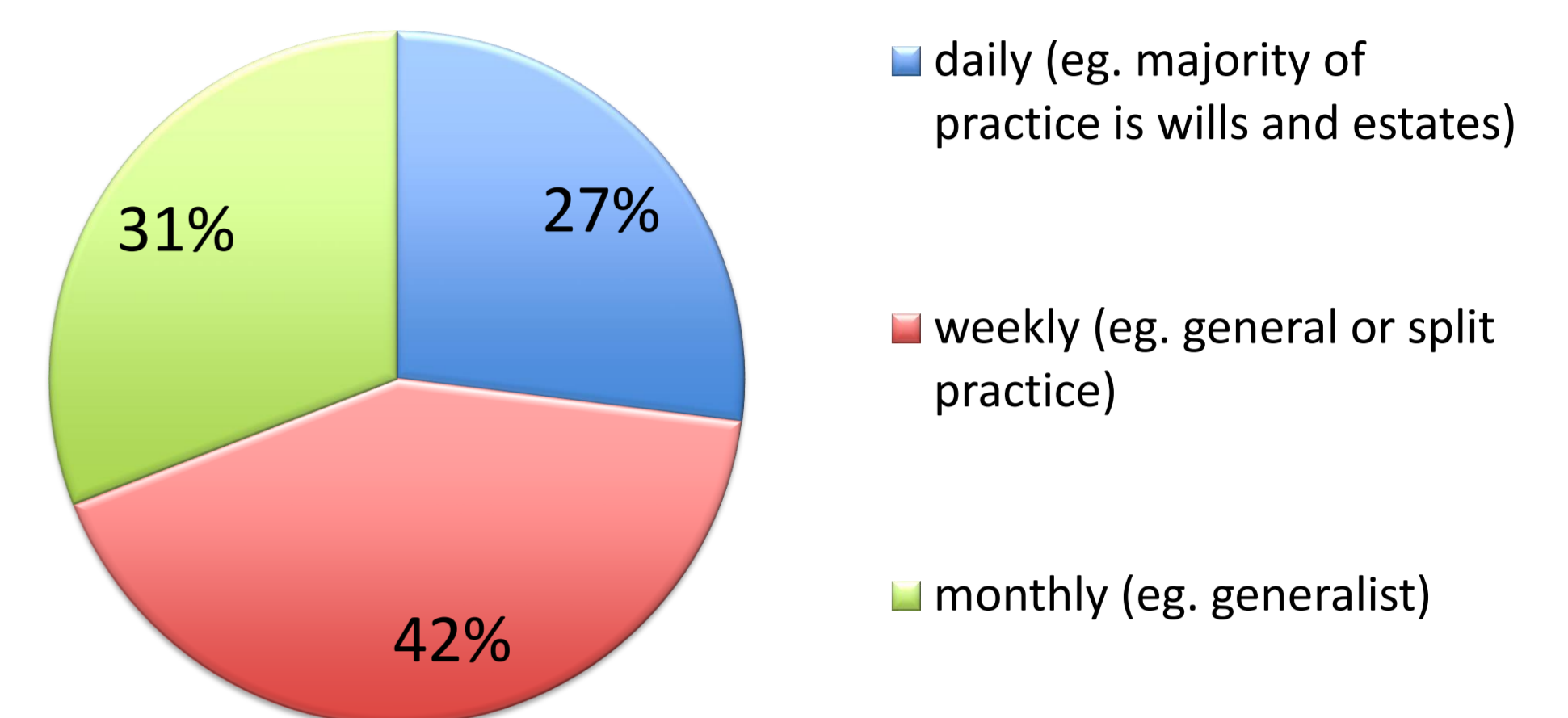


RESULTS

- 133** survey responses (7% of lawyers practicing in Wills & Estate Planning law)

- Lawyers assist with ACP **frequently** (Figure 1)
- Lawyers assist with:
 - Agent selection (93%)
 - Values and wishes for future health care (86%)
 - Encouraging ACP conversations with family members (79%)

Figure 1: Frequency that lawyers assist clients with ACP

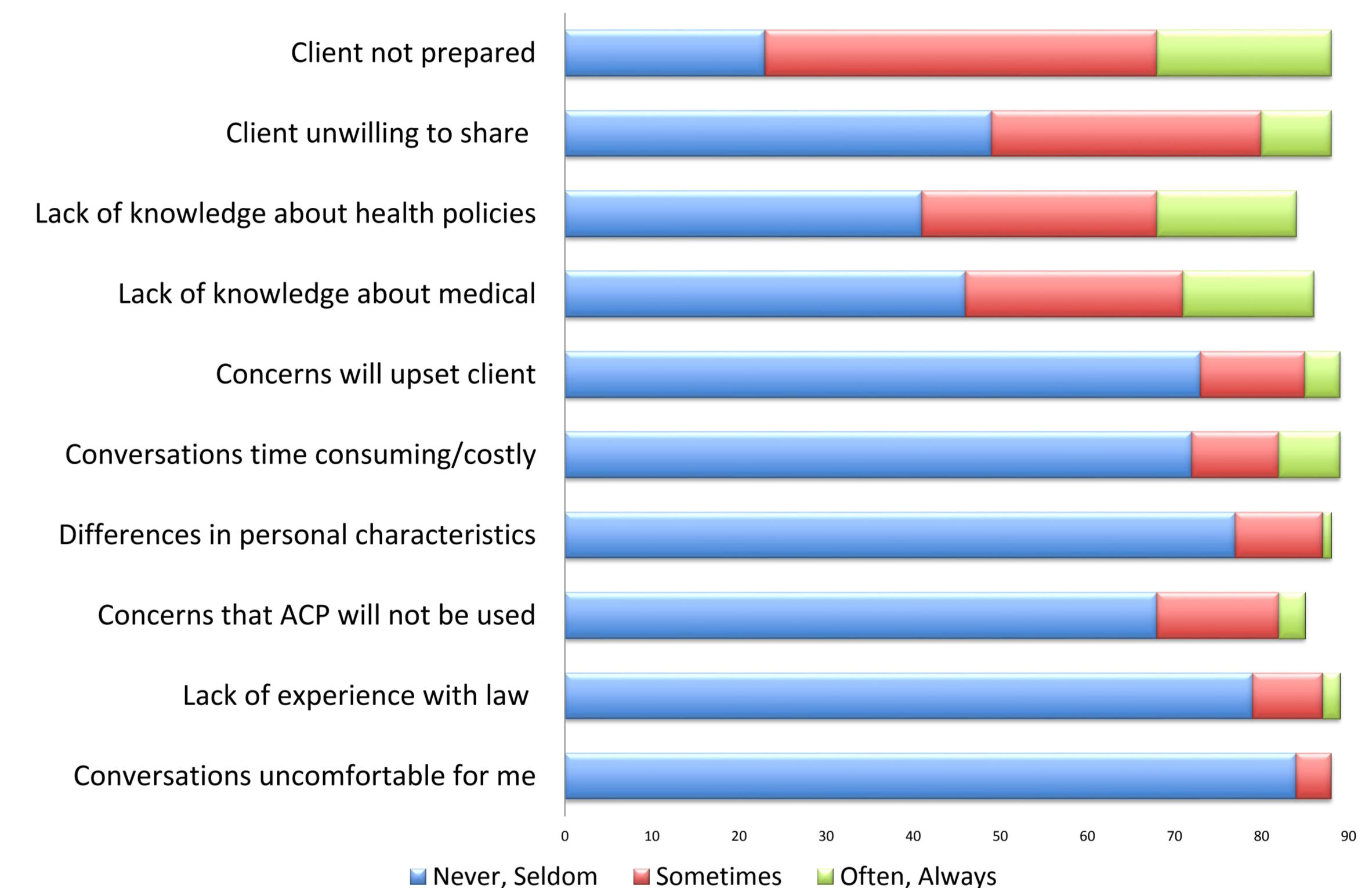


- 95%** of lawyers feel ACP benefits or significantly benefits clients

Figure 2: Barriers to assisting with ACP

Barriers (Figure 2)

- 49% of lawyers don't know or unsure what a Goals of Care Designation* (GCD) is
- 54% of clients do not share their GCD with their lawyer



Resources Needed

- Worksheets for clients to identify values, wishes and preferences
- Best practice guide for ACP for lawyers
- Q & A/script for lawyers
- Information re: health policies and resources
- Information about how GCD and Personal Directives function together in practice

* GCD is a medical order used to communicate the focus of care and guide use of medical interventions and locations of care

NEXT STEPS

- Follow up meeting with stakeholders about survey results and next steps (i.e. compiling/developing resources, joint continuing education)
- We propose to undertake this survey in three additional Canadian provinces to augment findings from Alberta survey and to inform the development of strategies to improve lawyers' practices and enhance interprofessional collaboration between lawyers and healthcare professionals

CONCLUSIONS

Lawyers are well-positioned and motivated to use their expertise to reduce barriers and assist their clients with ACP. ACP resources (for lawyers and their clients) and interprofessional collaboration have the potential to improve the uptake and quality of ACP.

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