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One in four adults in the U.S. lives with a disability.¹ A survey was conducted to assess the knowledge, skills, and previous training of adult primary care physicians (PCPs) in Connecticut (CT) about the medical needs of persons with disabilities (PWD).

Methods

Participants were recruited using email addresses provided by the Department of Public Health as well as a list of publicly available email addresses from a CT hospital website. In order to be eligible for recruitment into the study, the physician must have been listed as actively licensed in either family medicine (n=1,057) or internal medicine (n=5,499) (total n= 6,556). The University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this study. It was sent out via email during spring 2019 and consisted of 22 questions. All data collected through Survey Monkey and SPSS was used for analyses.

Results

Seventy-nine individuals with complete data were included in the analyses. The mean number of years of practice was 25.16 years (SD=12.04) and the majority of participants specialized in internal medicine (75%). Additional demographics are displayed in Table 1 and participant training is displayed in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Types of Training Received about Caring for PWD

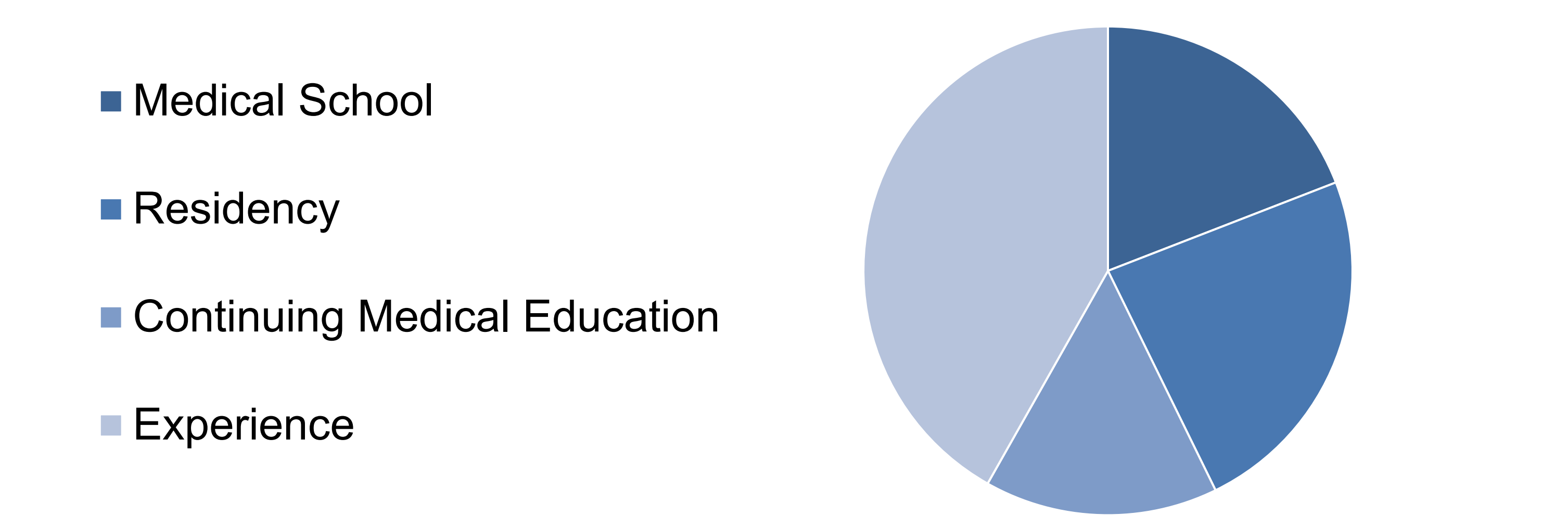


Table 1. Physician Demographics

I provide/have provided primary medical care to adults with the following:	%
Patients with Physical/Motor Disabilities	98.7
Patients with Intellectual Disabilities	91.1
Patients with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)	62.0
Patients with Mental Health Related Disabilities	94.9
Patients who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing	87.3
Patients who are Blind	70.9

Participants self-reported knowledge and skills (Figure 2) and accommodations used with PWD (Figure 3).

Figure 2. Knowledge and Skills Providing Care across Disability Types

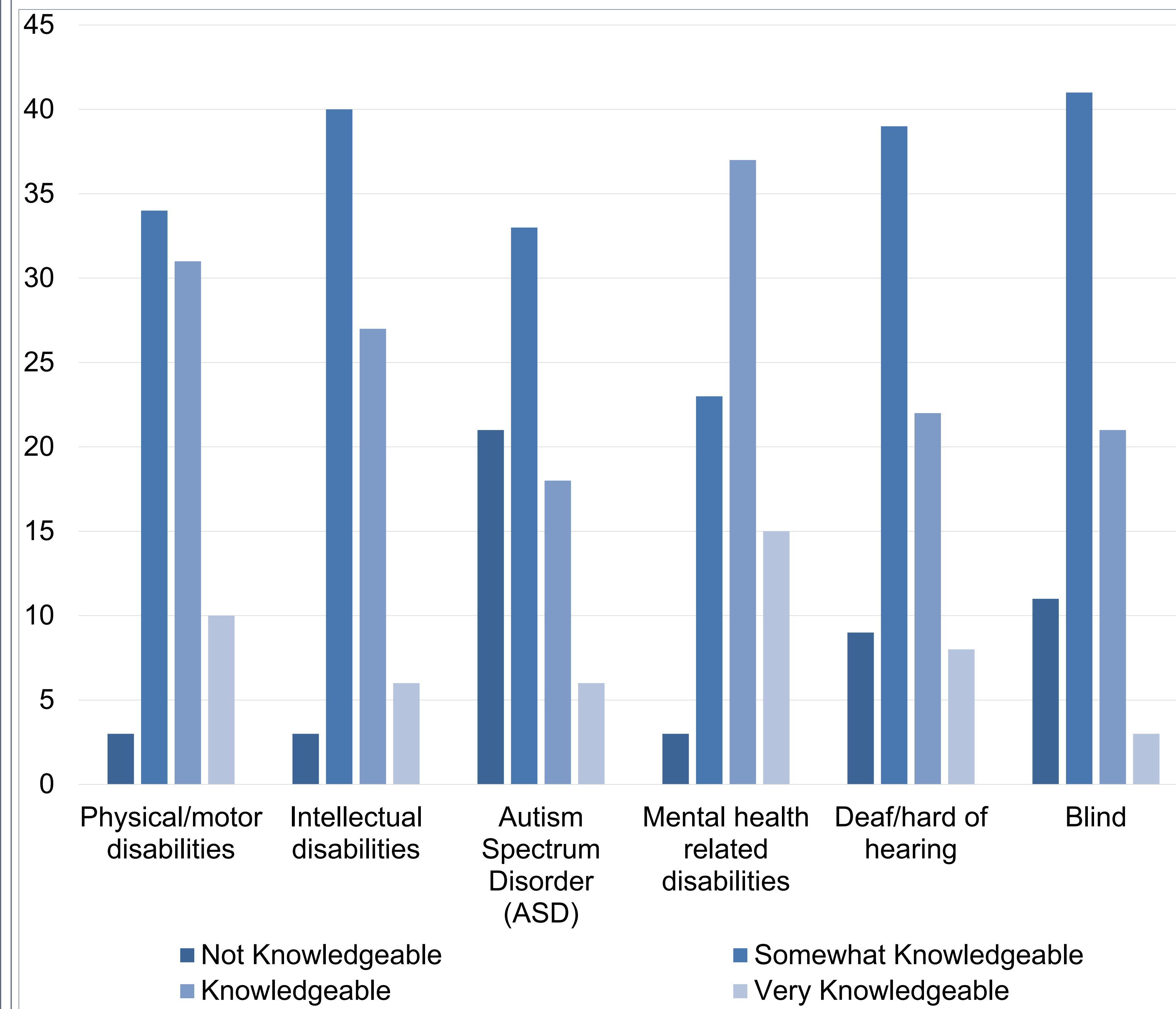
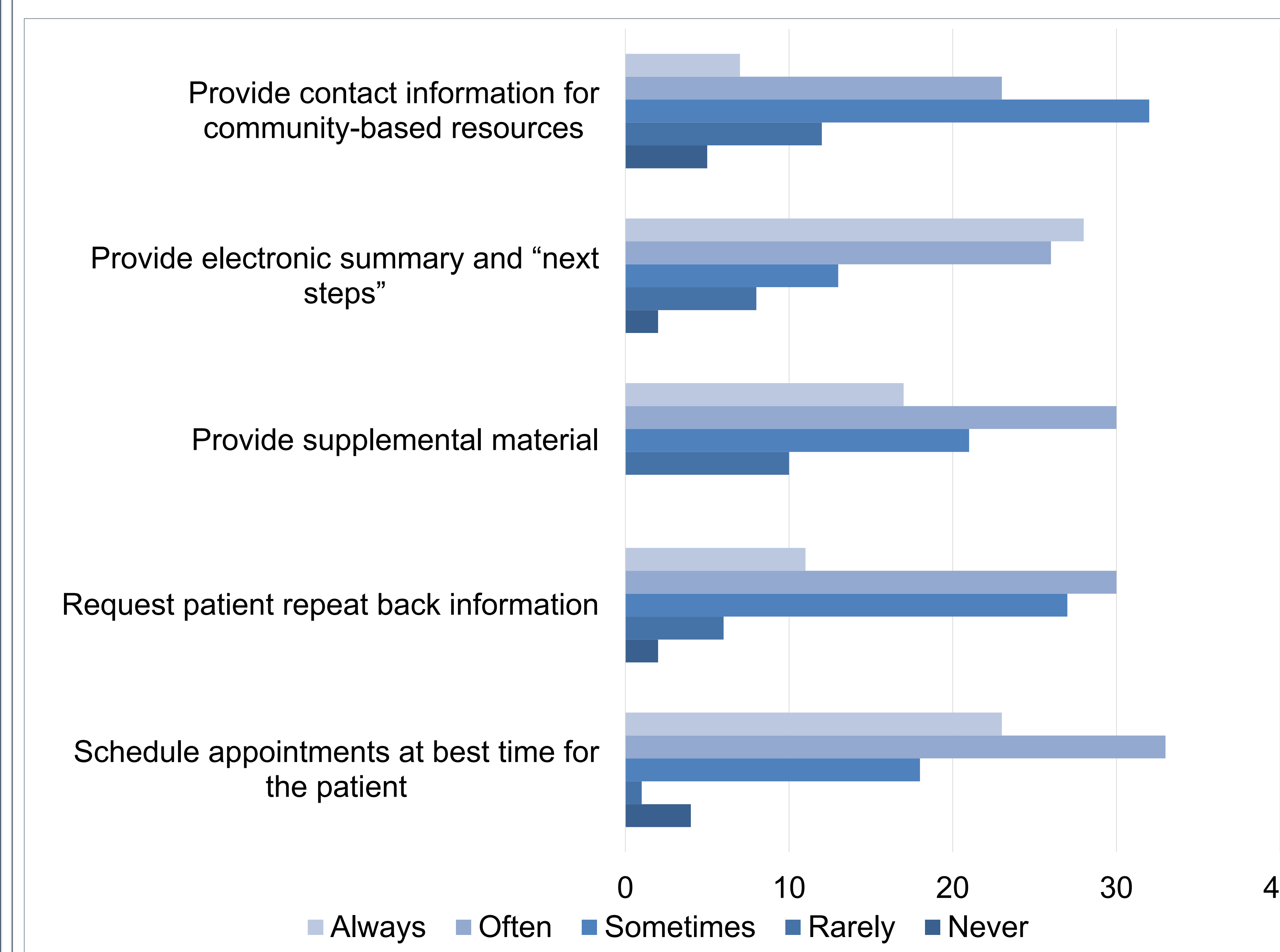


Figure 3. Accommodations used with PWD



Participants reported on typical appointments with PWD specific topics (Table 2).

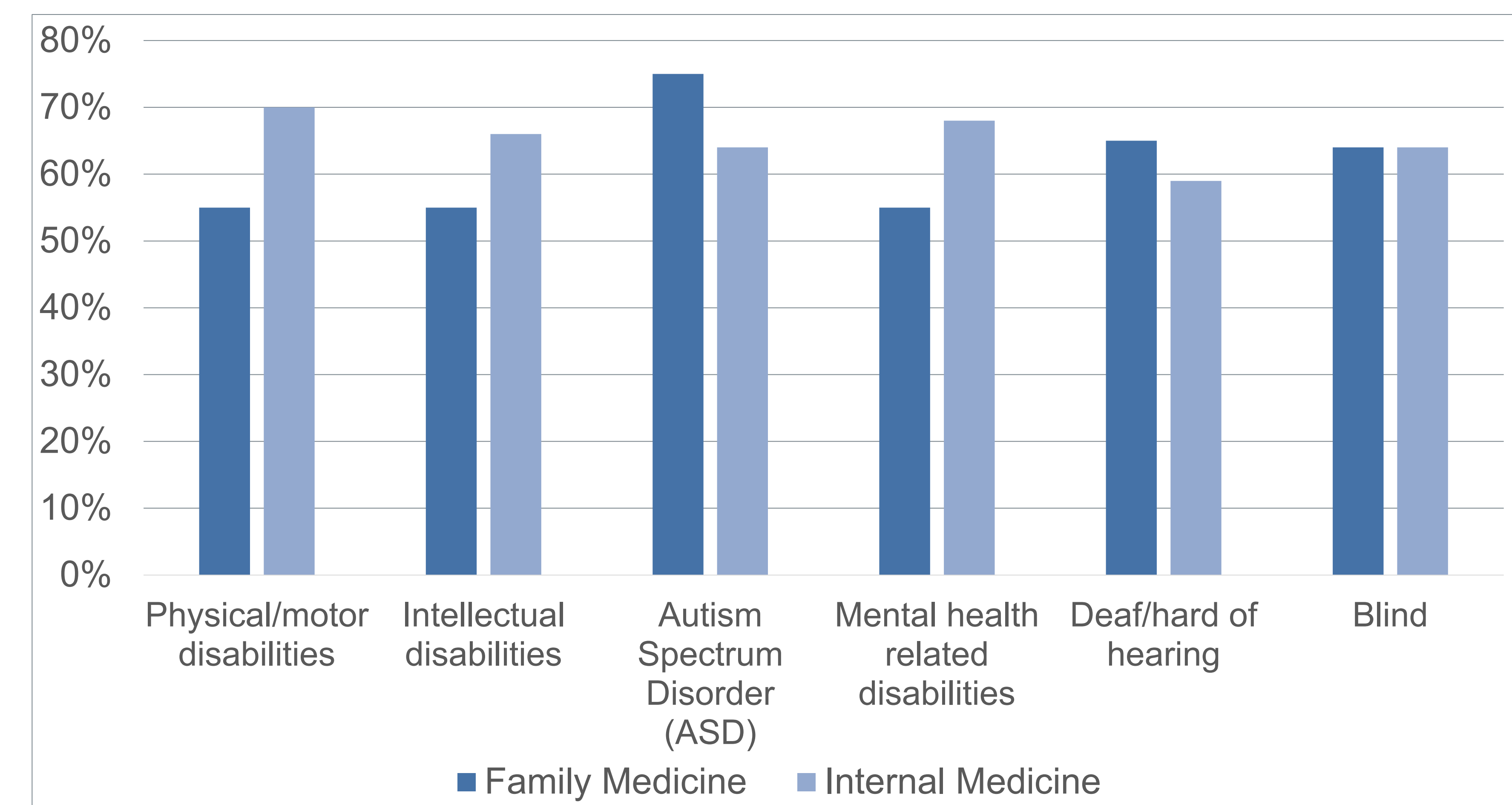
Table 2. Discussion Topics During Typical Primary Care Appointments with Patients with Disabilities

	Family Medicine (N=20)	Internal Medicine (N=59)
Dental health/services received	65.0	59.3
Mental health/services received	95.0	88.1
Involvement in social activities	95.0	86.4
Involvement in romantic/sexual relationships	45.0	45.8
Transportation	70.0	69.5

A regression model found that the amount of training significantly predicted self-reported level of knowledge and skills, $b = 1.06$, 95% CI [.43, 1.69], $t(73) = 3.35$, $p = .001$.

Majority of participants indicated an interest in receiving training to providing quality care for adults across all disability categories (Figure 4). The preferred modes of training include web-based trainings (62.0%) and workshops/conferences (54.4%). In order for PCPs to provide quality care, trainings and learning opportunities need to be made available across a provider's career.

Figure 4. Desired Training by Physician Specialty and Disability Type



References

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