

An Exploration of a Therapy Teams' Understanding of Fatigue and its Management in People with Multiple Sclerosis.

Introduction

Prevalence of fatigue in people with Multiple Sclerosis (pwMS) is as high as 70-90% and it is thought to be the leading cause of disability in people with early relapsing remitting MS¹. Fatigue is also associated with poorer quality of life in pwMS even when controlling for disease severity² and is the most cited reason for stopping work early³.

Our service offers physiotherapy and occupational therapy in the community or as an outpatient to people with a wide range of neurological conditions. Despite the prevalence of fatigue in pwMS and its high impact, as a service we do not currently offer any courses or groups to support pwMS specifically with their fatigue. Any fatigue management is offered within our one to one therapy sessions.

Objective

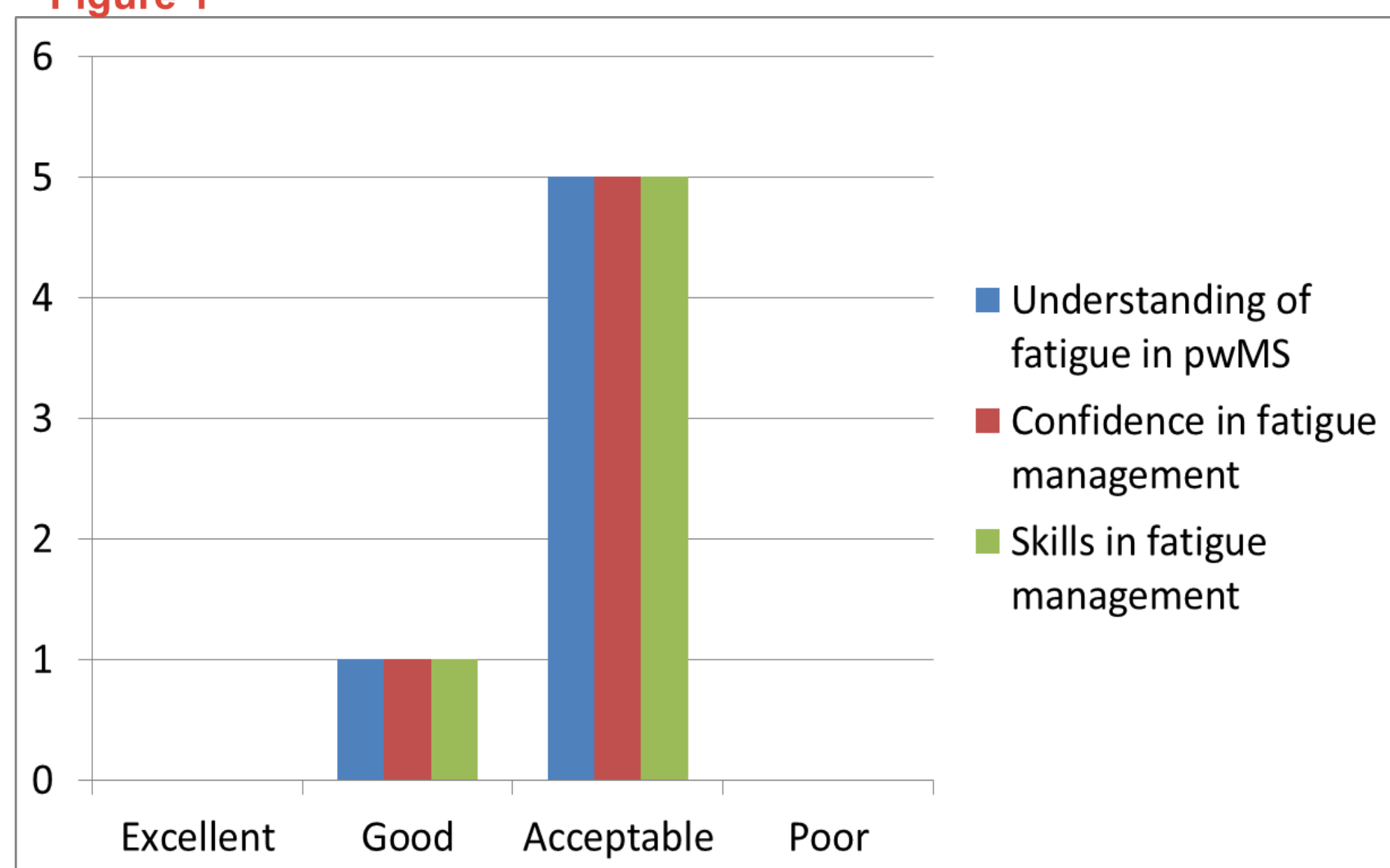
To explore the teams current understanding and management of fatigue in pwMS, in order to identify any gaps in knowledge and clarify the next steps for developing our service to best support pwMS living with fatigue. Our qualified therapists, 3 physiotherapists and 3 occupational therapists, completed a questionnaire and undertook a short semi-structured interview.

Key Findings

When asked to rate their understanding of fatigue in MS; their confidence in fatigue management and their skills in fatigue management as poor, acceptable, good or excellent: 5 out of 6 therapists evaluated themselves as acceptable in all three categories, with only one therapist evaluating them self as good (Figure 1).

When asked if they signposted pwMS with fatigue to written, online or other services 2 of the 6 therapists did this regularly, 2 sometimes and 2 rarely. Those that rarely signposted pwMS were unable to identify the resources available for pwMS about fatigue.

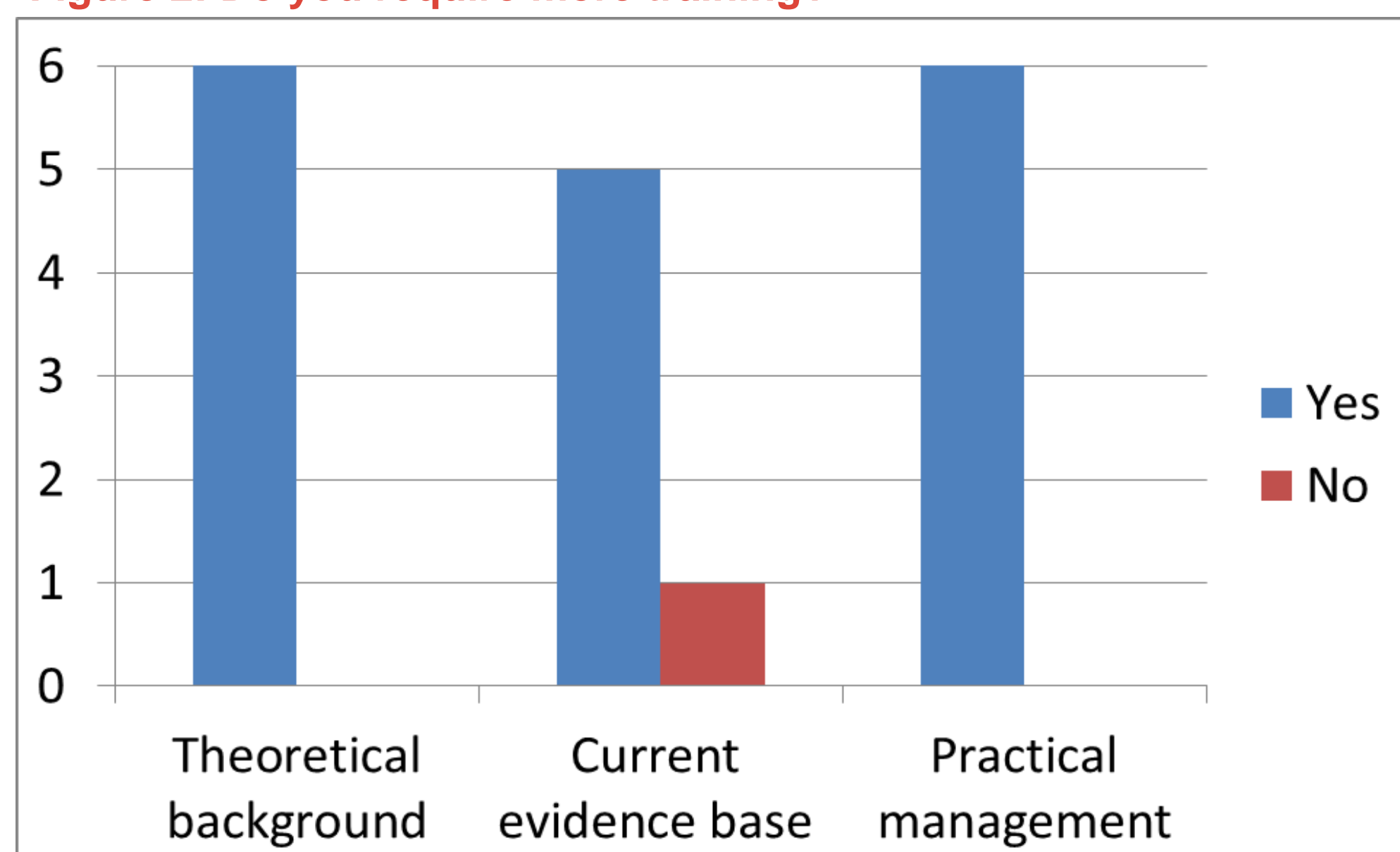
Figure 1



Key Findings continued...

None of the therapists had undergone any training in fatigue in pwMS and all felt they would benefit from further training - see figure 2 for more details.

Figure 2: Do you require more training?



Conclusions

There is a need for further training to improve our understanding, confidence and skills in fatigue management for pwMS. We are planning for 1 or 2 team members to undergo specific training and:

- Cascade knowledge and skills to the rest of the team through our in-service training
- Gather and disseminate written, online or other local resources for the team to use and where relevant develop our own resources.
- Offer fatigue management groups or courses to pwMS in our service.

This project has enabled us to explore current practice, highlight gaps in knowledge and skills and put a plan in place to develop our service to better support pwMS living with fatigue.

References

1. Carter J, Fatigue in Patients with Multiple Sclerosis, *Practical Neurology*, 2018, 42-46
2. Harrison et al., Which exercise and behavioural interventions show most promise for treating fatigue in multiple sclerosis? A network meta-analysis. *Multiple Sclerosis Journal*, 2021, 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1352458521996002>
3. Kobelt, G, Langdon, D, Jönsson, L. The effect of self-assessed fatigue and subjective cognitive impairment on work capacity: The case of multiple sclerosis. *Multiple Sclerosis* 2019; 25(5): 740-749.