

A UK survey of SymTrac™ usage and value

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Background

SymTrac is a free app that helps people with multiple sclerosis (MS) track general well-being and symptoms over time to build a picture of their health. It has been designed by people with MS for people with MS, in collaboration with healthcare professionals expert in MS and Novartis Pharmaceuticals UK Ltd. The data recorded by the app can be shared with MS specialist teams to make the most of vital consultation time and support decision-making.

In 2017, the SymTrac app was re-designed and enhanced based on feedback from MS nurses in order to improve the user experience and make the app more intuitive for patients. Subsequently, a survey was conducted among nurses and patients to gauge the impact of the app on MS management.

Aim

- To determine how MS nurses and patients utilise and value the SymTrac app
- To gain an understanding of which specific elements they found most useful

Results

- A total of 10 MS nurses and 23 patients with MS completed the survey

Patient demographics

- There was a wide range for time since MS diagnosis for the patients surveyed (Figure 1) and the majority had been using the SymTrac app for over 3 months (Figure 2)

Nurse feedback on SymTrac

- The MS nurses surveyed at baseline believed that SymTrac would be useful to patients for multiple scenarios, including (Figure 3):
 - Managing their medication and monitoring how effective treatment was for controlling their symptoms
 - Recognising and reporting relapses and identifying triggers for bad days

Methods

- At baseline, MS nurses from across the UK completed a survey questionnaire to understand their views on relapse reporting and how SymTrac could support MS patients. After 6 months, the same nurses completed a second questionnaire to capture their experience with SymTrac and whether their opinions had changed over time
- Patients with MS also completed a survey questionnaire 4–6 months after they started to use SymTrac. The survey explored elements of the app that they found most useful. This encompassed symptom reporting, medication and appointment reminders, and how the app could help provide useful information during consultations with their MS team
- The survey questions were structured to be answered either on a rating scale or through a multiple choice format

- Planning what they wish to discuss at their next consultation
- When asked to estimate the proportion of patients who fail to report their most recent relapse, the nurses estimated this to be 33% of patients
 - However, this estimate varied considerably among the individual nurses surveyed (Figure 4)

Patient feedback on SymTrac

- The features of the SymTrac app most utilised by patients were the appointments feature, medications list and symptom tracker (Figure 5)
- When asked about how they would use SymTrac, planning what they would discuss at their next consultation was highlighted by 65% of patients (Figure 6)

Summary and conclusion

- Living with MS can be challenging for patients due to the variety of symptoms and disabling conditions experienced in daily life¹**
- As such, there is an ongoing need for the monitoring of physical, social and cognitive functioning to determine the best approach for treatment and to assess the effectiveness of these strategies¹**
- MS nurses play a pivotal role in the diagnosis, treatment and management of MS. They also provide patients with the education, support and counselling that they need²**
- Based on the results of the MS nurse and patient surveys, the SymTrac app was useful for helping patients keep track of their symptoms, medications and appointments**
- Both nurses and patients felt the most useful feature of the SymTrac was helping patients to plan what they wished to discuss at their next consultation, allowing them to make the most of this time**
- Both nurses and patients can mutually benefit from understanding the MS condition through using the app. The results can help identify any challenges that are faced along the duration and course of treatment**
- Overall, the majority of patients with MS would recommend this app to other MS patients**

- The features for monitoring symptoms and creating graphs to share with their MS nurse were not used as frequently as the other features
- When asked how useful SymTrac was for helping them understand their MS, patients gave the app a rating of 3.3 out of 5
- The majority of patients (87%) would recommend SymTrac to another person with MS

Figure 1 | Time diagnosed with MS

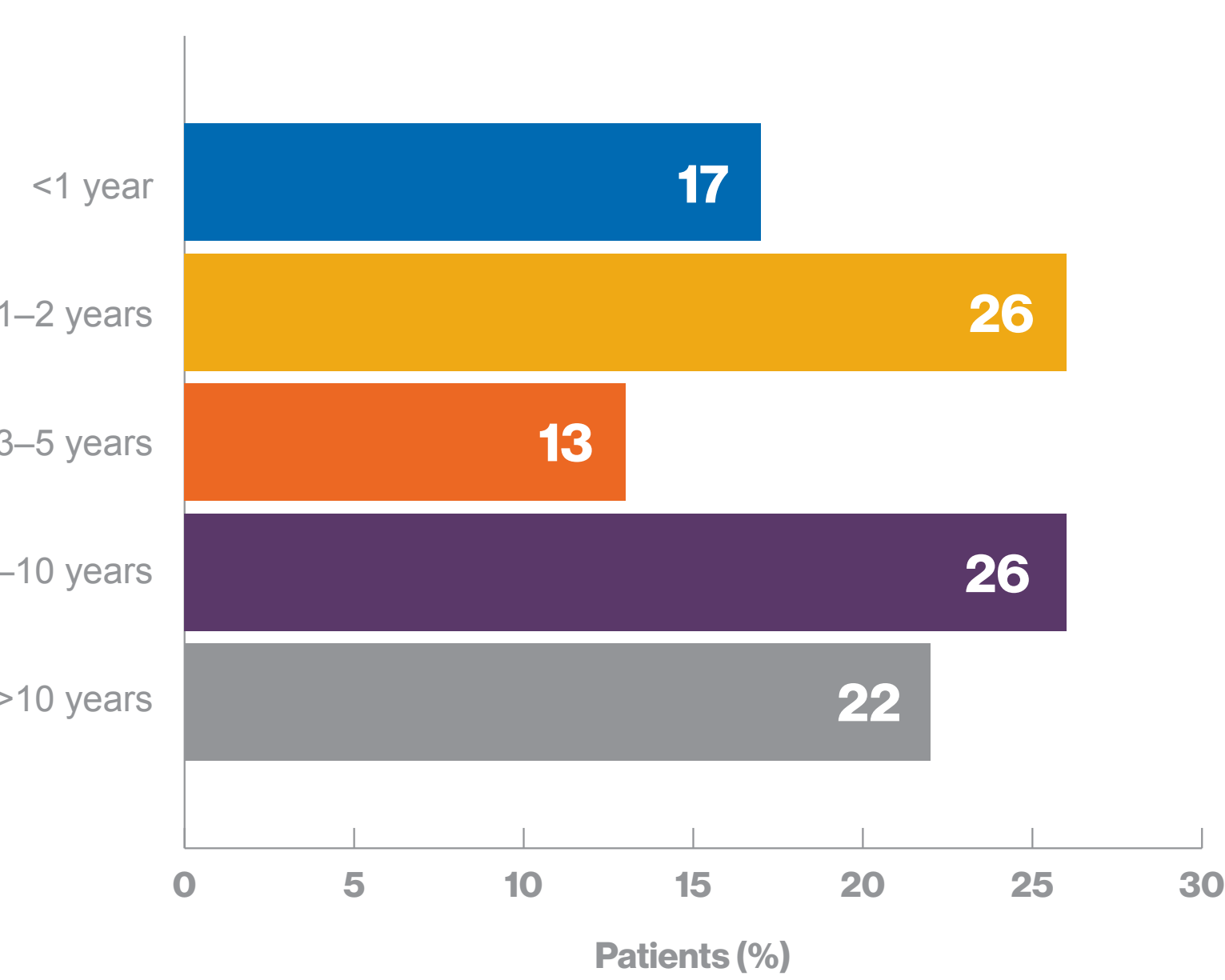


Figure 2 | Time using SymTrac

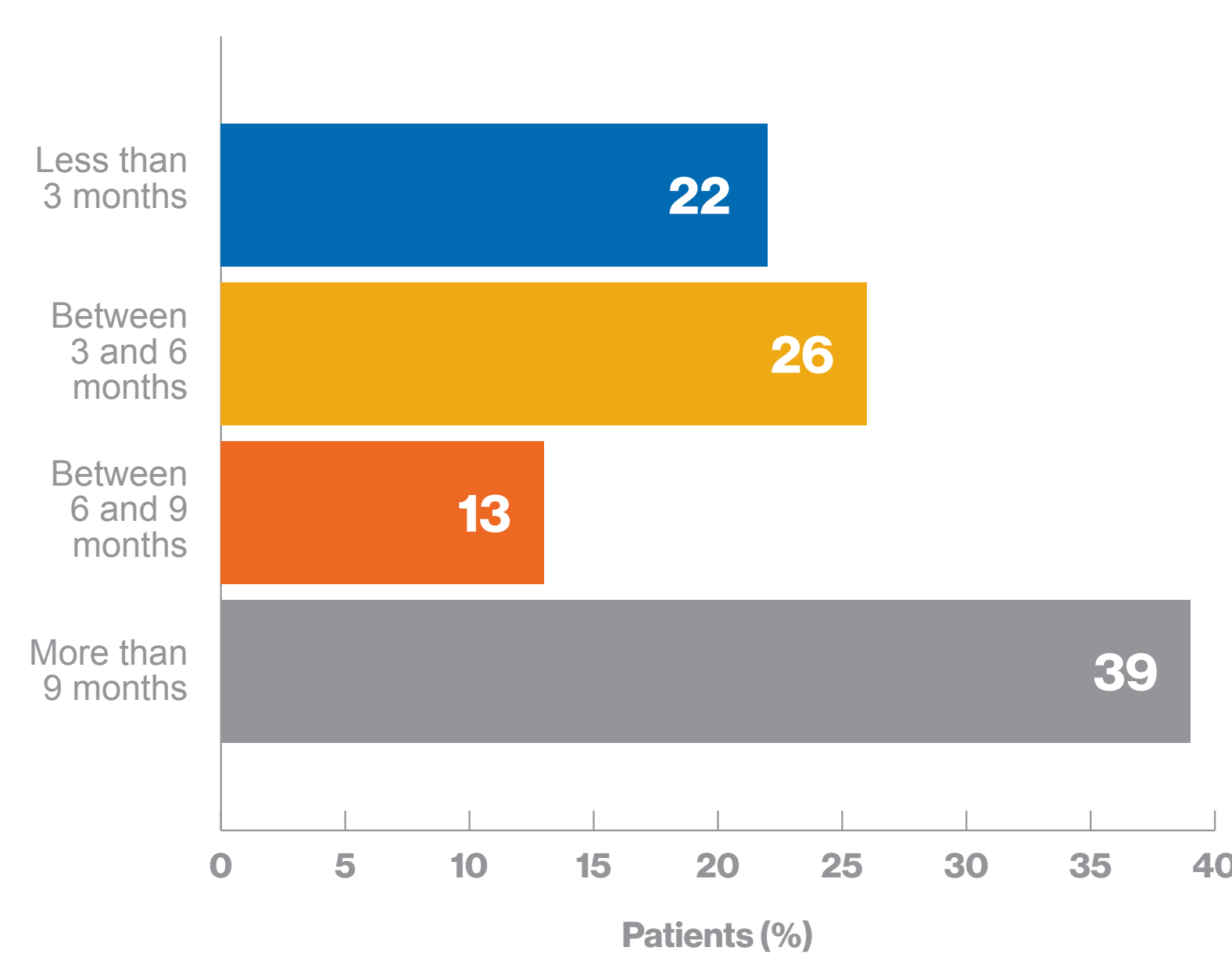


Figure 3 | From the perspective of a nurse, how useful do you think SymTrac will be for helping patients monitor the following?

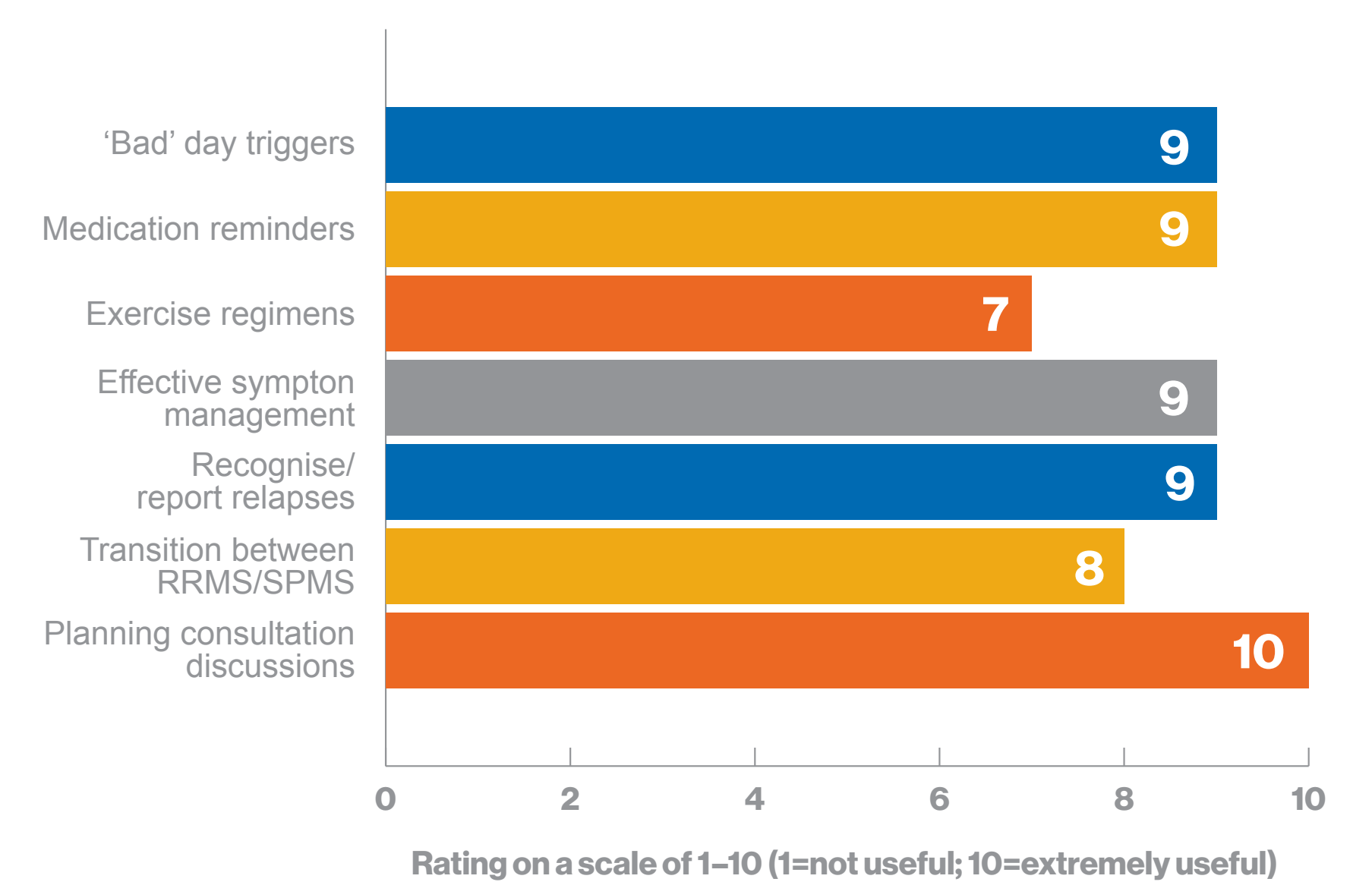


Figure 4 | From a nurse's perspective, what number of patients fail to report their most recent relapse?

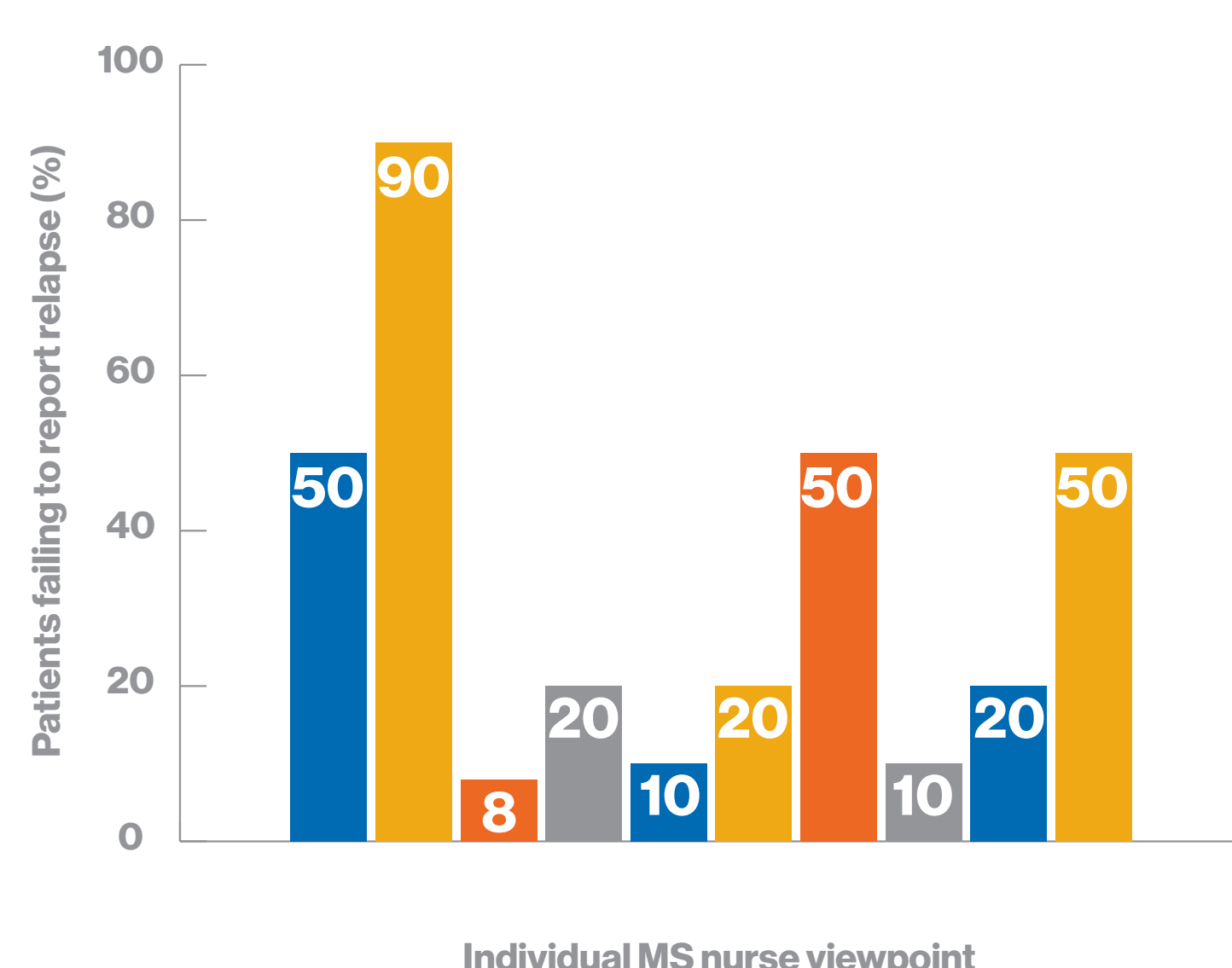


Figure 5 | Which aspects of SymTrac did patients use? (N = 23)

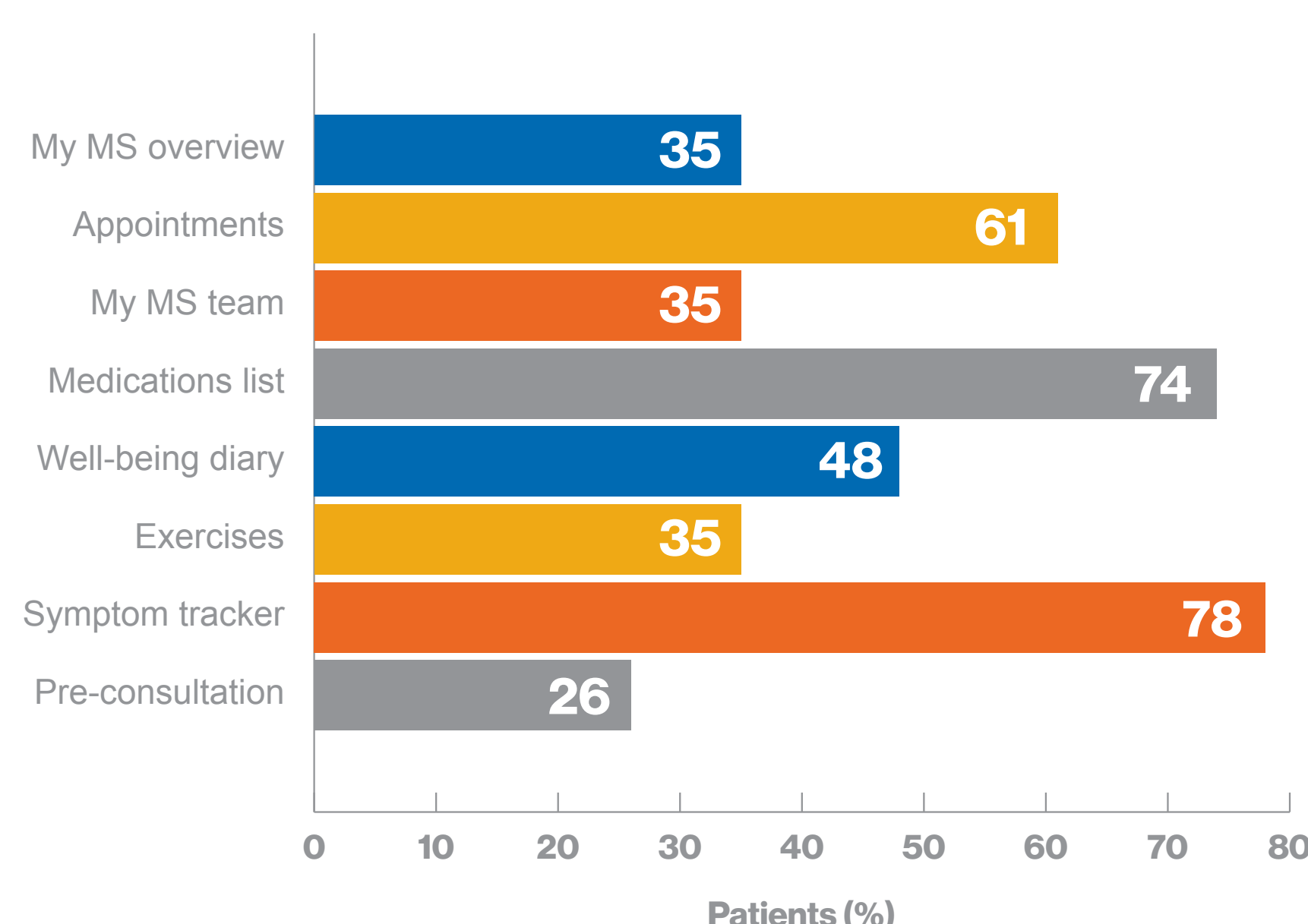
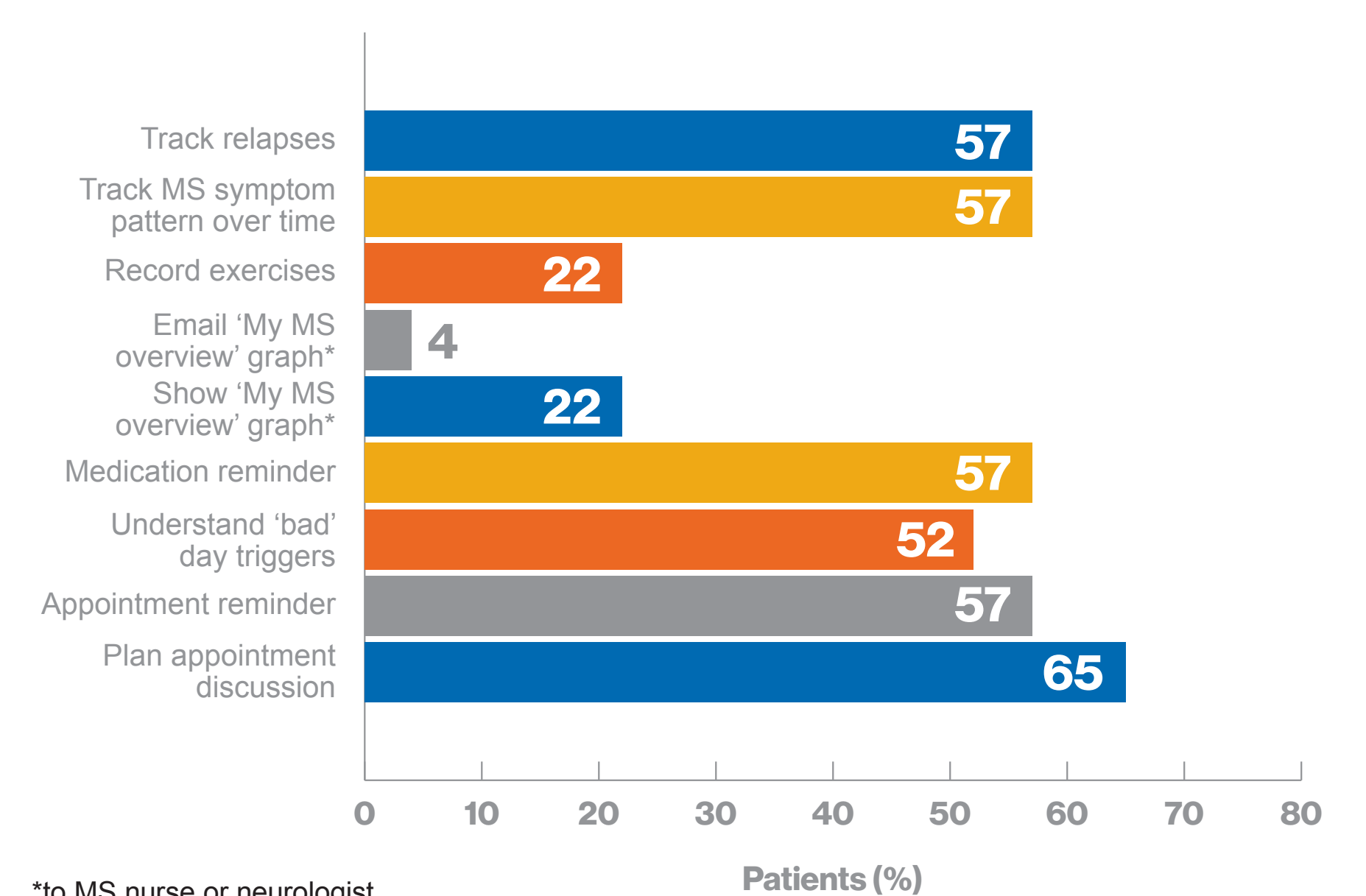


Figure 6 | How did patients use SymTrac?



References 1. Gulick E, et al. *Int J MS Care* 2011;13:137–145; 2. Burke T, et al. *Int J MS Care* 2011;13:105–112.

Acknowledgements On behalf of the authors we would like to acknowledge all survey participants.

Funding This survey was wholly funded by Novartis Pharmaceuticals UK Ltd. Editorial support was provided by Virgo Health, which was funded by Novartis Pharmaceuticals UK Ltd.

Abbreviations MS=multiple sclerosis; RRMS=relapsing–remitting multiple sclerosis; SPMS=secondary progressive multiple sclerosis.