

The evolving role of patients in patient safety

Traditionally:

Patients as

- passive objects of health care delivery
- risk factor , e.g., compliance with medication
- victims of errors and adverse events

Increasingly:

Patients as

- attentive observers of care, reporters of events
- partners in safety checks, e.g., multiple identity controls
- vigilant "last hurdle" in the prevention of errors

Patients as vigilant partners

Many patients observe care very closely and notice what happens with and around them.

Typical reports:

- Patient wonders that the wrong knee being preped for arthroscopy
- Patient notices the high flow rate and short infusion time of IV
- Patient is happy that the medication stopped, unexpectedly...
- Patient is surprised about second blood taking within 1 hour
- Patient notices systematically different hand hygiene behaviours of staff after being transferred within the same hospital

Patients as vigilant partners

Many patients observe care very closely and notice what happens with and around them.

Typical reports:

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None of these patients reported their observations to their caregivers.

Threats went undetected.

Why?

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IV

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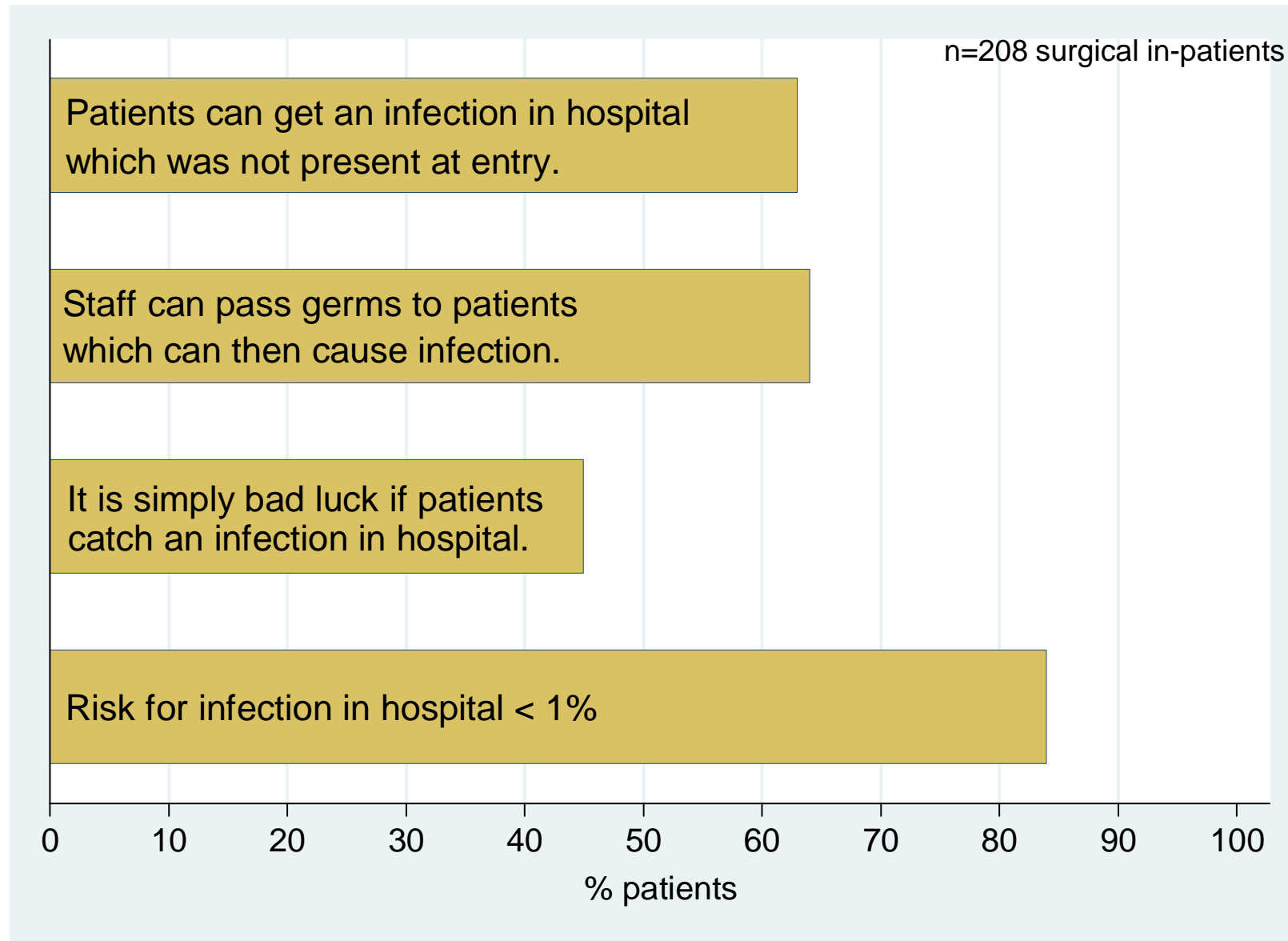
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Patients as vigilant partners

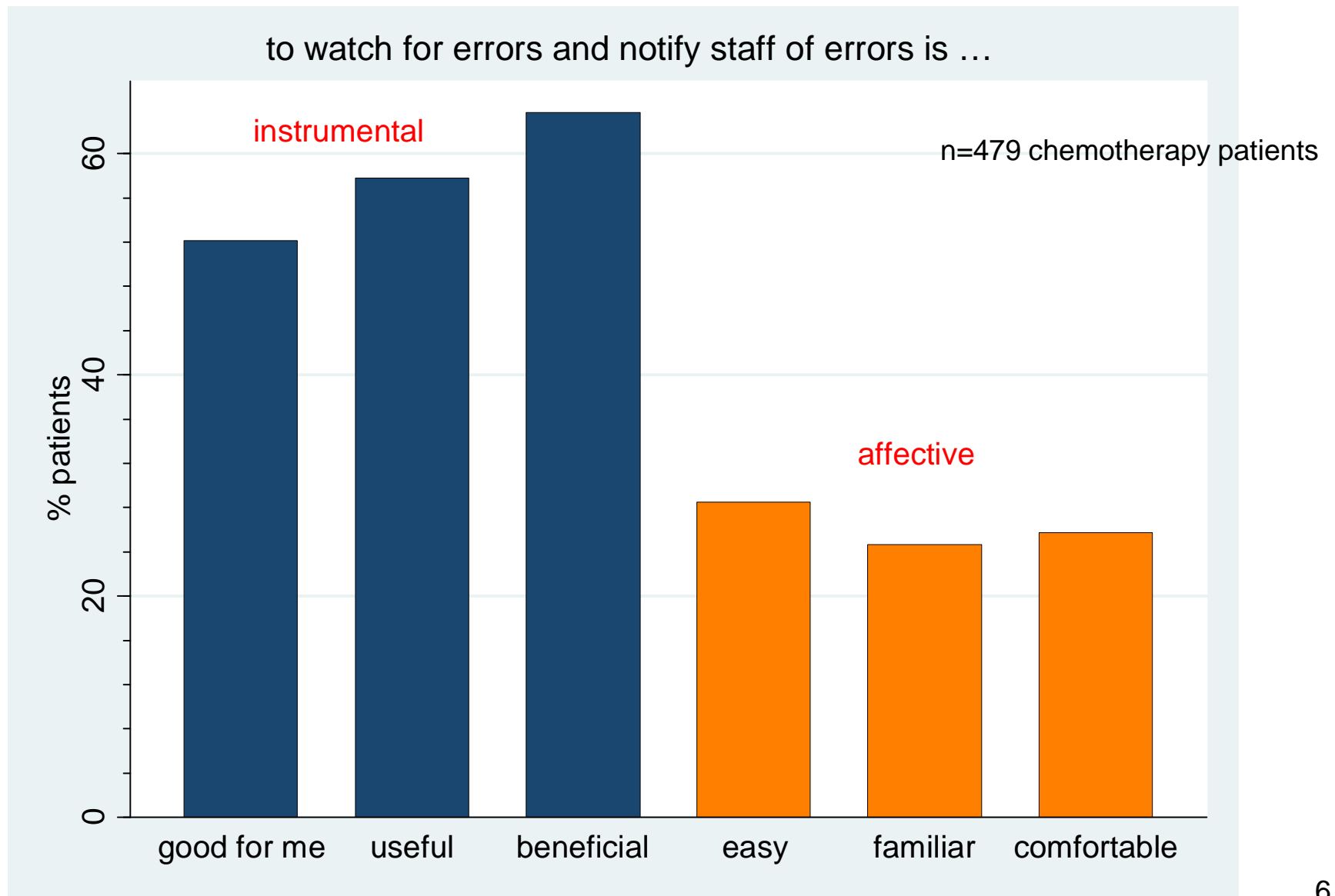
Reasons underlying patients' silence

1. Limited knowledge and awareness about risks of health care
2. Safety is not a familiar subject
3. Norms in hospital that signal better not to question staff

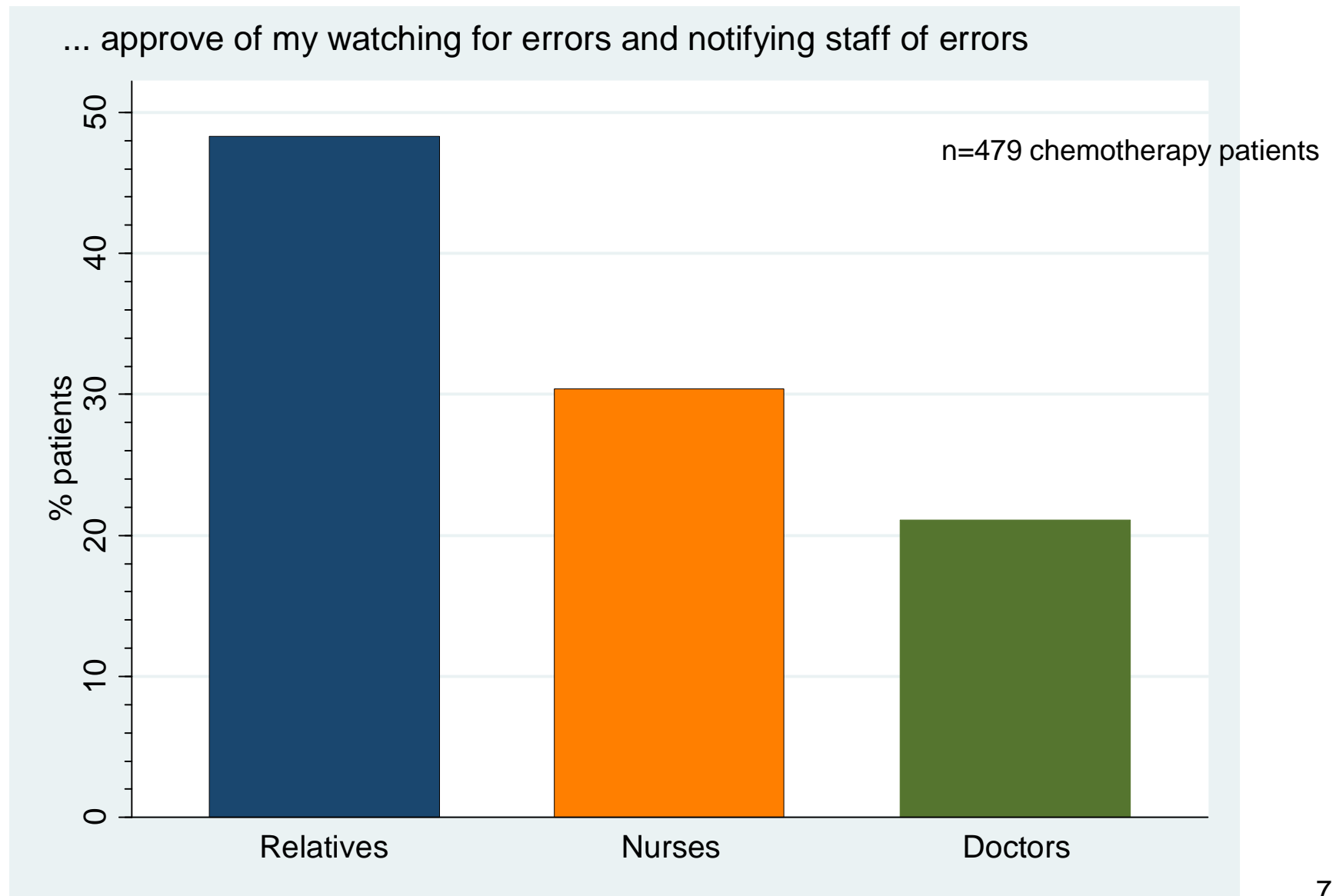
Patients as vigilant partners: Knowledge about infections



Patients as vigilant partners: Attitudes of patients



Patients as vigilant partners: Perceived norms



It takes two to tango ...

The perspectives of health care workers

Patients as vigilant partners: Conclusions

Patients:

- ... are often concerned about their safety in hospital
- ... are usually willing to engage for their safety
- ... frequently see and know things we do not know
- ... are a valuable resource

Patients need:

- ... Instruction and motivation to directly communicate
- ... Norms in hospital that make this easy
- ... Health care workers who actively involve them
- ... A health care system that openly talks about safety and errors