

Has the updated Current Care Guideline for Schizophrenia reached physicians treating schizophrenic patients?

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Introduction and objectives

Schizophrenia is a serious mental illness, and it is estimated that there are approximately 50 000 patients with schizophrenia in Finland. The evidence-based Finnish Current Care Guideline for Schizophrenia was first published in 2001 and updated in the beginning of 2008. In the updated guideline early recognition and treatment of persons at risk of psychosis, the role of antipsychotic medication, psychoeducation, family psychoeducation and social skills training are emphasized. The purpose of this study is to find out whether the updated Current Care Guideline for Schizophrenia has reached physicians who care for patients with schizophrenia.

Methods

An internet-based webropol-questionnaire, which takes about five minutes to answer, was created, based on the updated Schizophrenia Guideline. It included few background questions and 34 questions concerned with Schizophrenia Guideline with three possible answers (yes, no, I don't know). Members of the Finnish Psychiatric Association, whose contact information include e-mail address received the questionnaire. 15% (N=105) of the physicians who received the questionnaire, answered. The answers were analysed with SPSS version 13.0.

Results and Conclusions

The age of the 105 physicians who answered the questionnaire ranged from 29 to 76, and 49% (N= 51) of the answerers were male. 83% (N=87) were psychiatrists, and 16% (N=17) were in training. 46% were working in the Helsinki University Hospital area, 16% in the Kuopio University Hospital area, 13% both in the Turku and Tampere University Hospital areas and 10% in the Oulu University Hospital area, 4% of the answerers were currently not working. 78% (N= 82) of the answerers were aware that the Current Care Guideline for Schizophrenia is updated, and 52% (N=55) reported, that they had read the updated guideline. They were asked, whether the updated Guideline has changed their treatment practises; 69% reported "no", 26% reported "I cannot say" and 6 % chose the answer "yes".

Further questions on schizophrenia and its treatment were based on the updated Guideline. For 24 of the 34 questions, 80% or more of the answerers chose the right answer. Both in the whole questionnaire (Figure 1) and among the 10 questions with most variable answers (Figure 2) physicians who had read the updated Guideline had more right answers than physicians who had not read the updated Guideline, and the results were statistically significant (Pearson Chi-Square test; $p < 0.001$ for both figures).

Majority of the answerers were psychiatrists, to whom schizophrenia is a familiar topic. However, some aspects of the updated Guideline were less well-known, since in ten questions of the 34, less than 80% of the answerers chose the right answer. A higher answer percentage would have given results that are easier to generalize, but the answerers were probably at least as well aware of the updated Guideline as any Finnish physician treating schizophrenic patients, since they took the time and interest to answer the questionnaire. 78% of the physicians treating schizophrenic patients are aware that the Current Care Guideline for Schizophrenia is updated. To further enhance the implementation of its contents an internet-based educational course based on the updated Current Care Guideline for Schizophrenia is prepared.

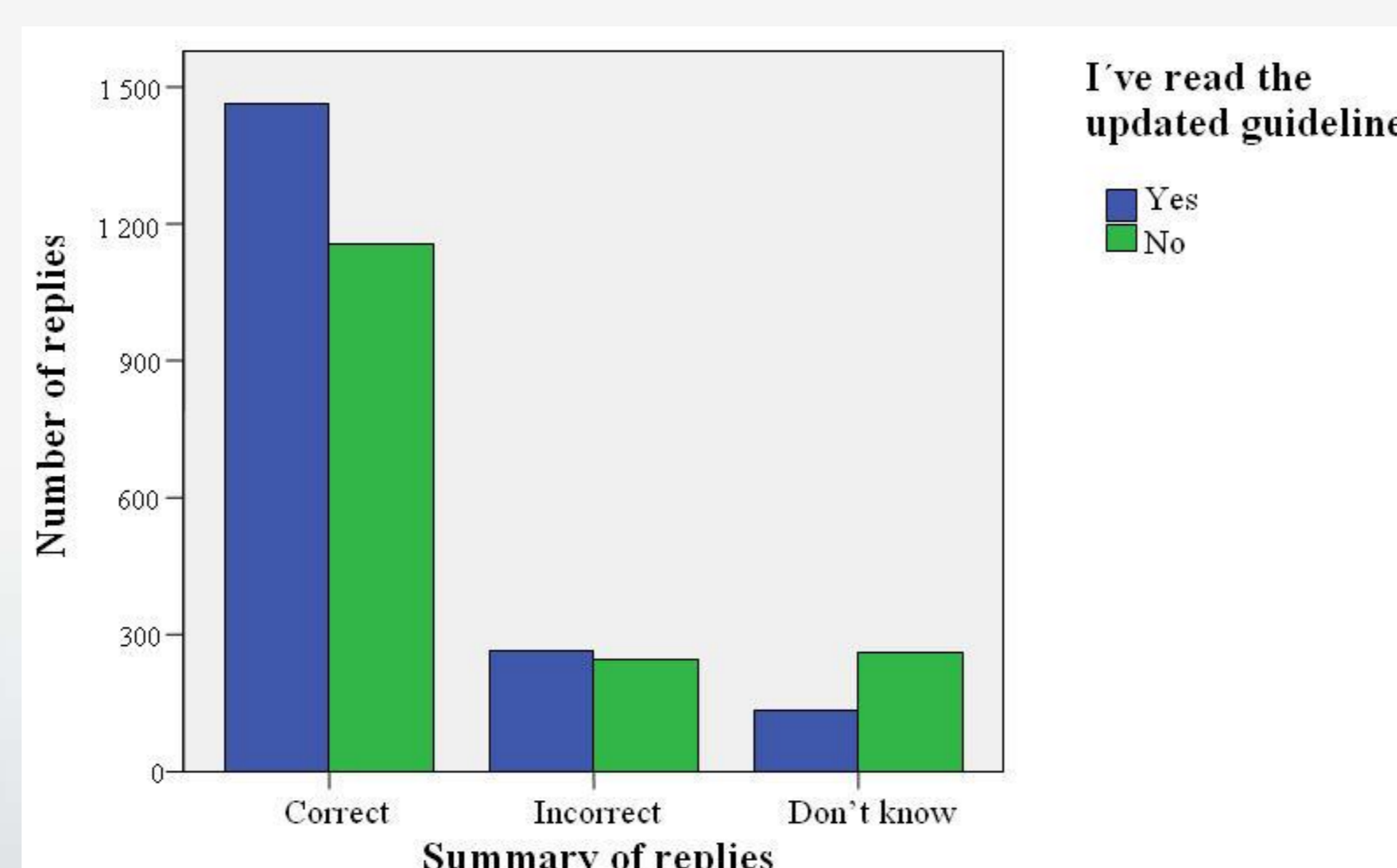


Figure 1: All replies

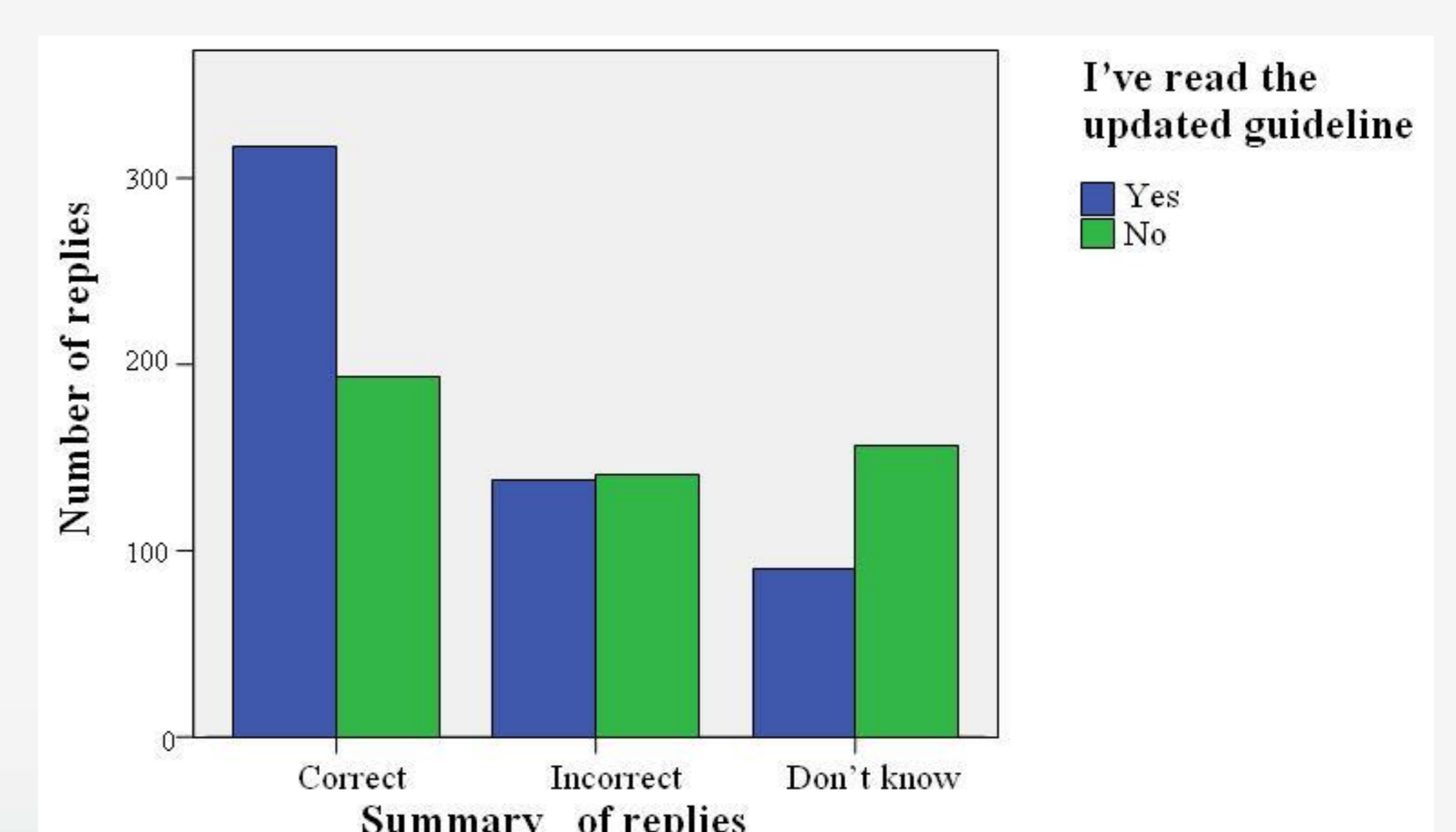


Figure 2: 10 replies with the largest diversity

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