

Community Health Fairs and D.O. Awareness

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Introduction

- Community health fairs promote healthy behaviors through free screenings, and disseminate information about osteopathic medicine to local residents
- Osteopathic physicians (DOs) comprise 6% of the physician workforce in the United States, yet a majority of Americans do not recognize the differences and similarities between DOs and allopathic physicians (MDs)
- Few studies exist regarding the use of community health fairs as a means for augmenting awareness of the osteopathic medical profession, particularly in a community composed primarily of African-Americans, Latinos, and immigrants
- Biannual community health fairs led by medical students of Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine provide free health screenings to Harlem community members
- Objectives:**
 - Evaluate the impact of community health through medical student-led promotion of free screenings and behavior change
 - Determine the effectiveness of using health fairs as a communicative medium to increase public awareness of osteopathic medicine within the Harlem community

Materials and Methods

- From biannual health fairs between Fall 2014 and Fall 2019; data from 2015, 2016, 2018, and 2019 are presented. (Note: portion of Spring 2018 survey was omitted due to missing data.)
- Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained. Data was gathered from surveys in English, Spanish, and French.
- Attendants were asked to complete a voluntary, validated, anonymous 37 questions per survey (content condensed to 33 questions, along with format modifications from that of previous years', in Fall 2019), modified from an existing survey by Stamat¹.
- The survey included questions about:
 - Osteopathic medicine awareness
 - Medical history
 - Tobacco/alcohol use
 - Physical activity sections
 - Demographics (i.e., sex, age, race/ethnicity, and education level)
- Data regarding relation between frequency of health fair attendance and scoring on medical professional questions was analyzed via 1-sample t-test with the null hypothesis that higher frequency does not have impact on answering DO awareness questions correctly.

Results

This section illustrates findings in four parts:

- Demographics of health fair participants (Fig 1)
- Health impact on returning participants and frequency of health fair visits (Fig 2-3)
- Participant knowledge of DOs and preference for healthcare professional (Fig 4-5)
- Comparison of each DO awareness question and answer and health fair attendance frequency breakdown (Table 1)

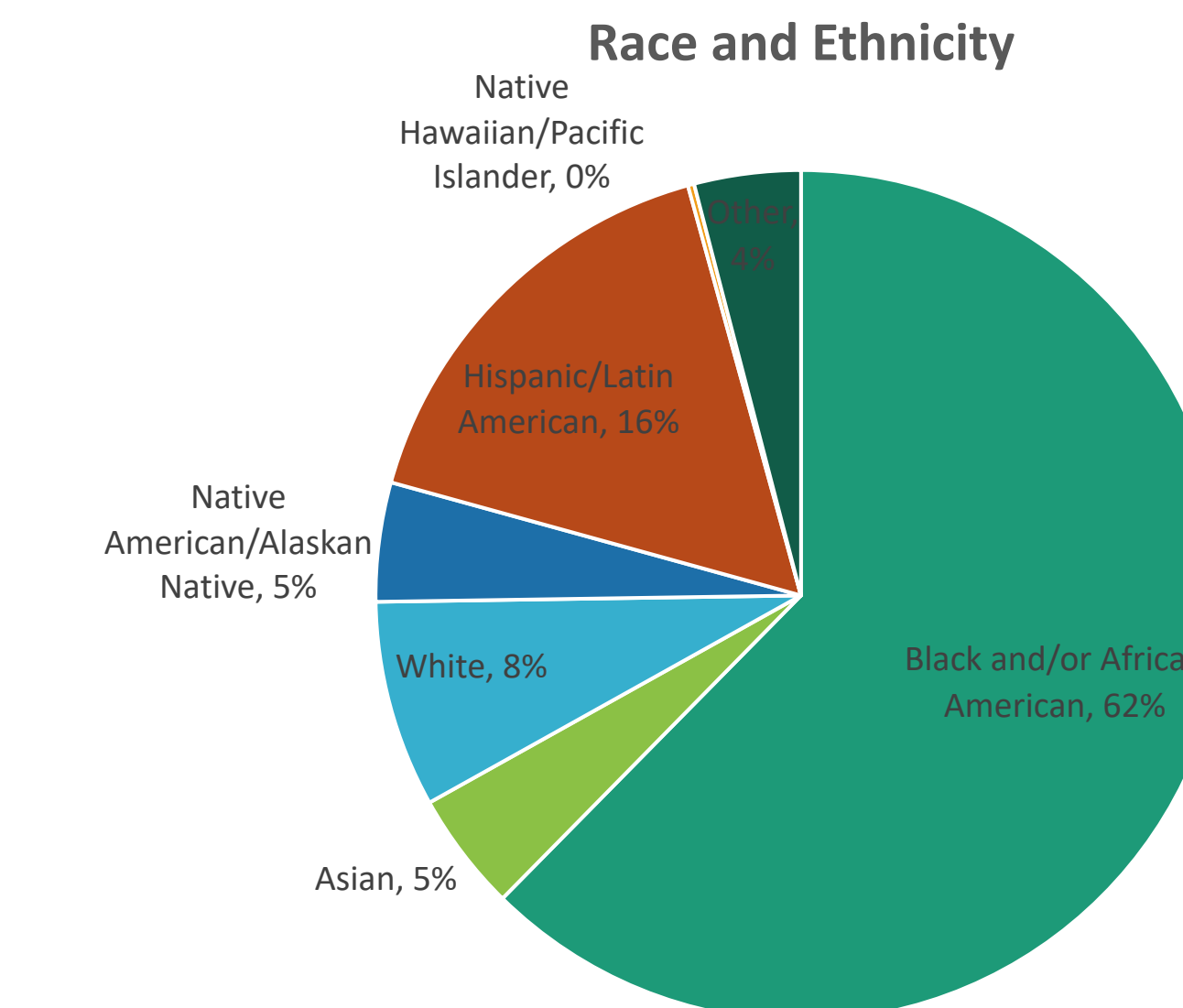


Figure 1: Majority of health fair participants identified as black and/or African American; second largest majority of participants identified as Hispanic/Latin American

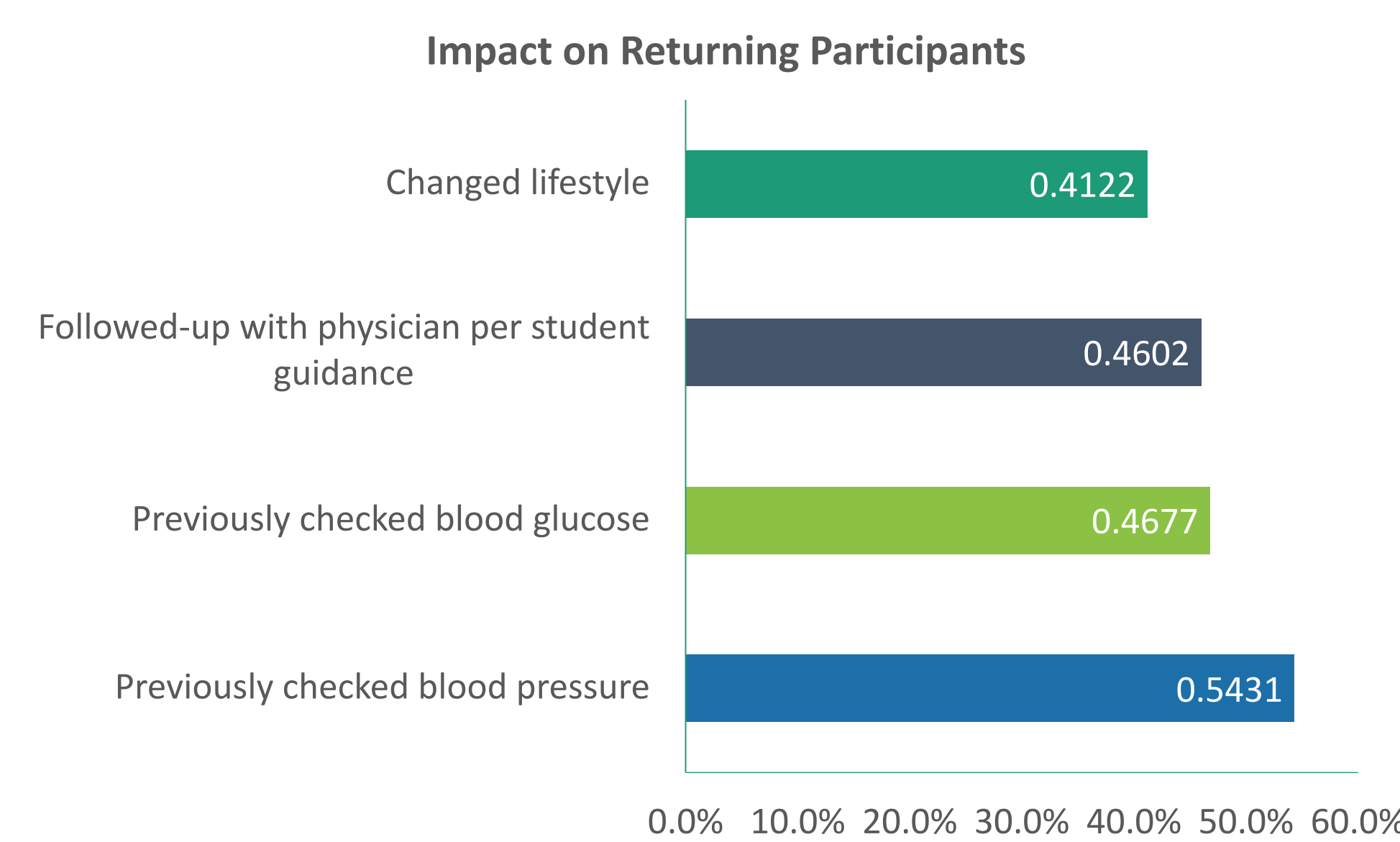


Figure 2: Most respondents had previously attended the health fair to have blood pressure checked by medical students. Less than half of respondents marked having changed their lifestyle and followed-up with physician regarding an abnormal result. *Not shown:* 93.6% of respondents (n=313) reported that the health fair was having an impact in Harlem

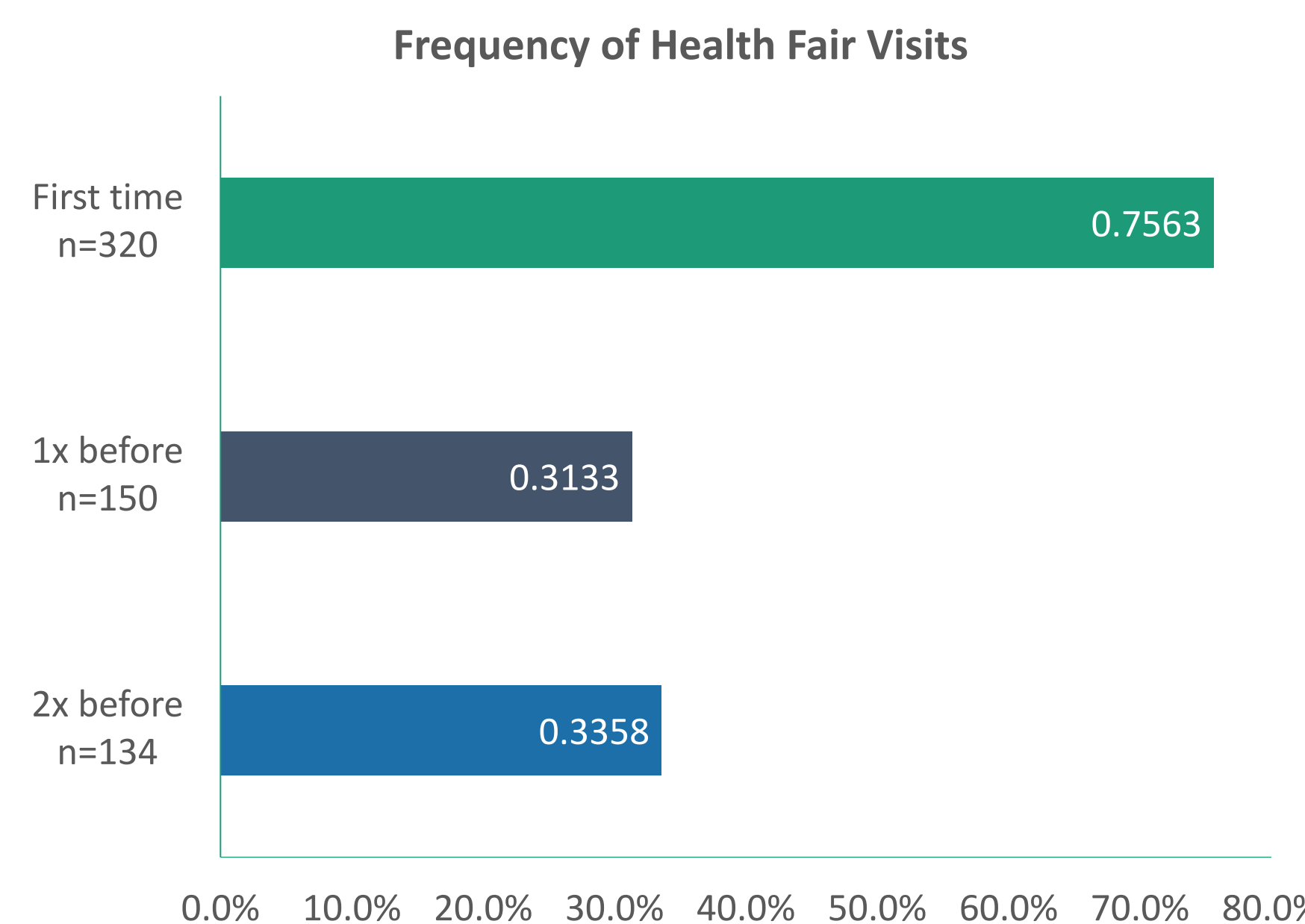


Figure 3: Most participants were newcomers; returning participants were more likely to have come at least two times before a respective health fair than once before

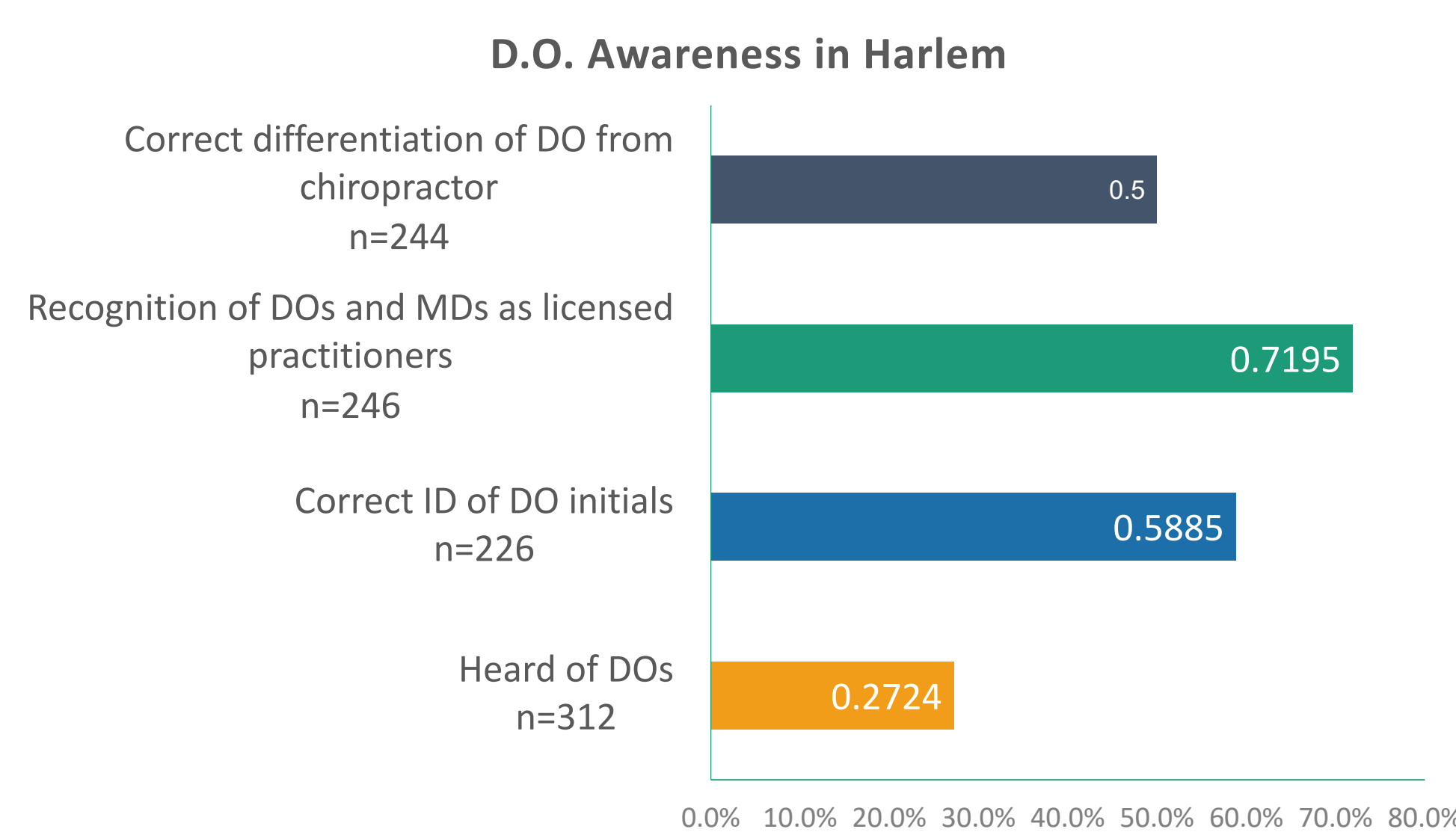


Figure 4: A majority of respondents were able to recognize that both DOs and MDs were licensed healthcare professionals; however, a low number of respondents had heard of DOs

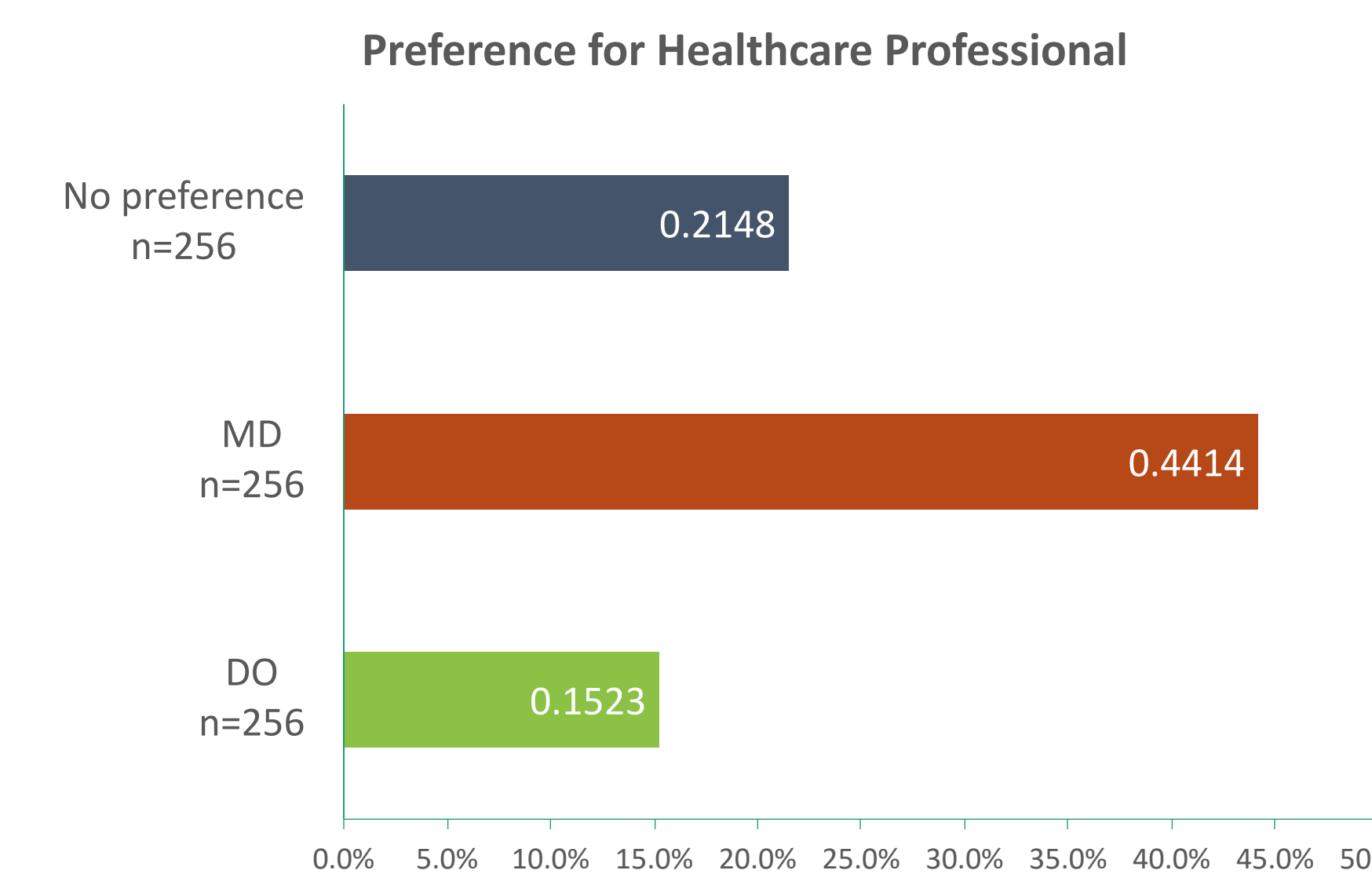


Figure 5: Most respondents marked preference for MDs as their primary healthcare professional; more respondents marked having no preference for MDs, DOs, nurse practitioners, or chiropractors than that for DOs only

D.O. Awareness Question	Answer	Newcomer	Have at least attended once before	P-Value
Q1 - Heard of DOs	Yes	54	31	0.228
	No	185	60	
Q2 - Correct ID of DO initials	Correct	94	39	0.097
	Incorrect	145	52	
Q3 - Recognition of DOs and MDs as licensed practitioners	Strongly agree/agree	192	79	0.243
	Strongly disagree/disagree	47	12	
Q4 - Correct differentiation of DO from chiropractor	Correct	89	39	0.118
	Incorrect	150	52	

Table 1: 1-sample t-test shows that there is no statistical significance between scoring higher on DO awareness and frequency of health fair attendance for each DO awareness survey question

Conclusions and Future Plans

- We conclude that we have a unique community composed of minority residents who may or may not readily afford access to healthcare due to barriers associated with finances and immigration; in the future, we aim to include questions regarding health insurance to have a clearer picture of our local community background
- The health fairs provide the community's need for screenings and show that they have impact in initiating healthy behaviors; they also show the need for investing efforts to increase public awareness of DOs through direct interaction with members of the communities
- A majority preference for MDs may be due to uninformed reporting, as a low number of participants marked having heard of DOs prior to the health fair; it is worth noting if the osteopathic medical society could be asking better questions to gain insight into what community members prioritize and seek in receiving primary medical care
- To continue assessing the impact of enlarging awareness of osteopathic medicine through the health fairs, we will conduct a comparison test of education status of participants with DO awareness scores
- Based on the sizable number of returning participants and positive reviews from newcomers and returnees alike, we can confirm the importance of sustaining and improving the health fair; through the communicative medium of health fairs, the osteopathic medical profession has potential in working towards cultivating trust with communities most vulnerable for lack of healthcare and to learn more about preference for allopathic physicians



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References

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