

Nurses' and midwives' knowledge of, and preferences for using healthcare interpreters: a cross-sectional survey

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Background

Healthcare professionals face significant challenges when caring for patients with whom they do not share the same language.¹ Using professional healthcare interpreters can reduce the challenges associated with language barriers and improve patient outcomes however, some nurses report using interpreters to be complex and time consuming, increasing workloads and making relationships between the patient and nurse more complicated. In some cases, this may lead to nurses choosing to utilise family members over health care interpreters.

Aim

To explore nurses' and midwives' knowledge of, and preferences for using healthcare interpreters.

Methods

Between March and April 2018, 221 nurses and midwives who worked at Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital in adult inpatient departments were invited to participate in a cross-sectional survey. Staff were consented prior to completing the survey. A self-reported survey developed by Hudleson and Vilpert² was translated and adapted to assess nurses' and midwives' knowledge and experiences of, and preferences for using health care interpreters.

Results

Survey response rates across wards ranging from 25% to 100% (*M*: 64.6; *SD*: 23.2). Two thirds (66.8%) of respondents spoke a language other than English at home. Over half (54.1%) had interpreted on behalf of a colleague over the preceding six months, with 11% interpreting frequently or very frequently. Requests to interpret were most commonly from other nurses and doctors. The preferred method of communication was family or friends (43.6%), followed by professional interpreters (39.2%). Respondents indicated reasons for these choices were less time consuming, and feeling the patient was more at ease. Those with higher postgraduate qualifications were also more likely to use a healthcare interpreter ($\chi^2(1, 21) = 18.436$, $p < .001$).

Registered Midwives (RMs) were more likely to know how to access an interpreter, have used an interpreter and have received training on working with interpreter services than Registered Nurses (RNs) ($p < .01$ for all differences).

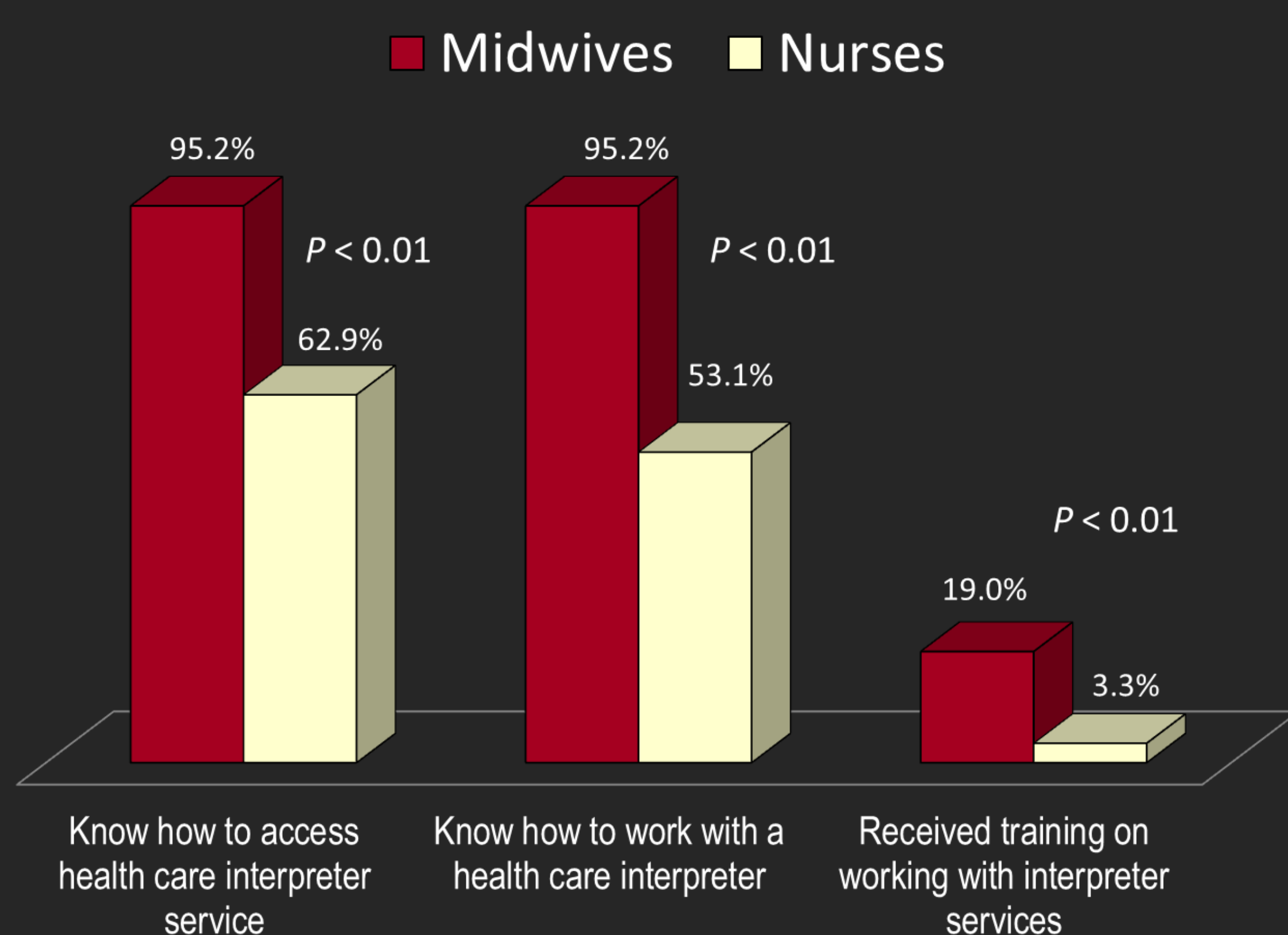


Figure 1. Comparison of nurses' and midwives' access to and use of interpreter services

Use interpreter services for general care

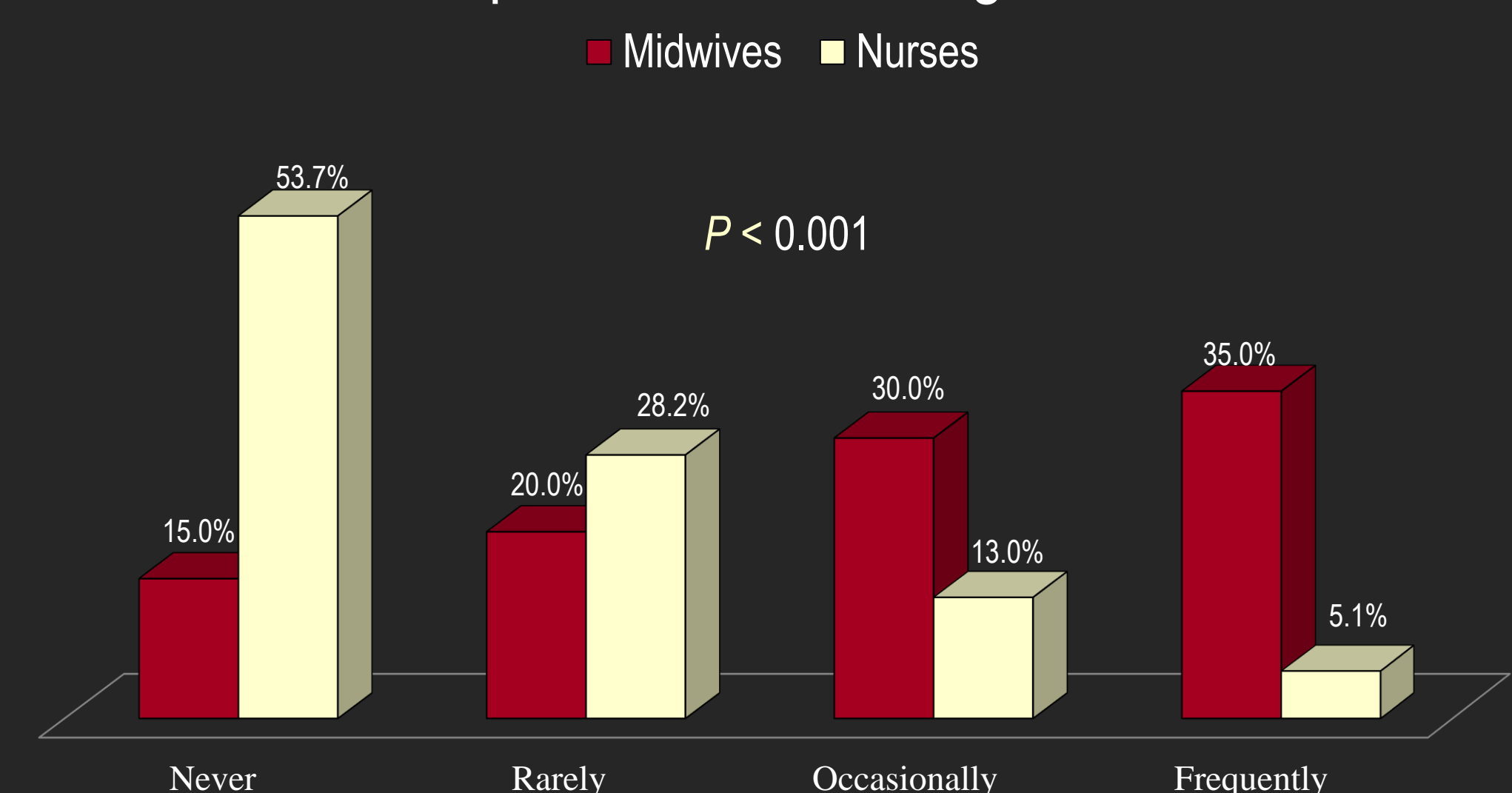


Figure 2. Comparison of nurses' and midwives' use of interpreters for general care

Use interpreter services for complex care

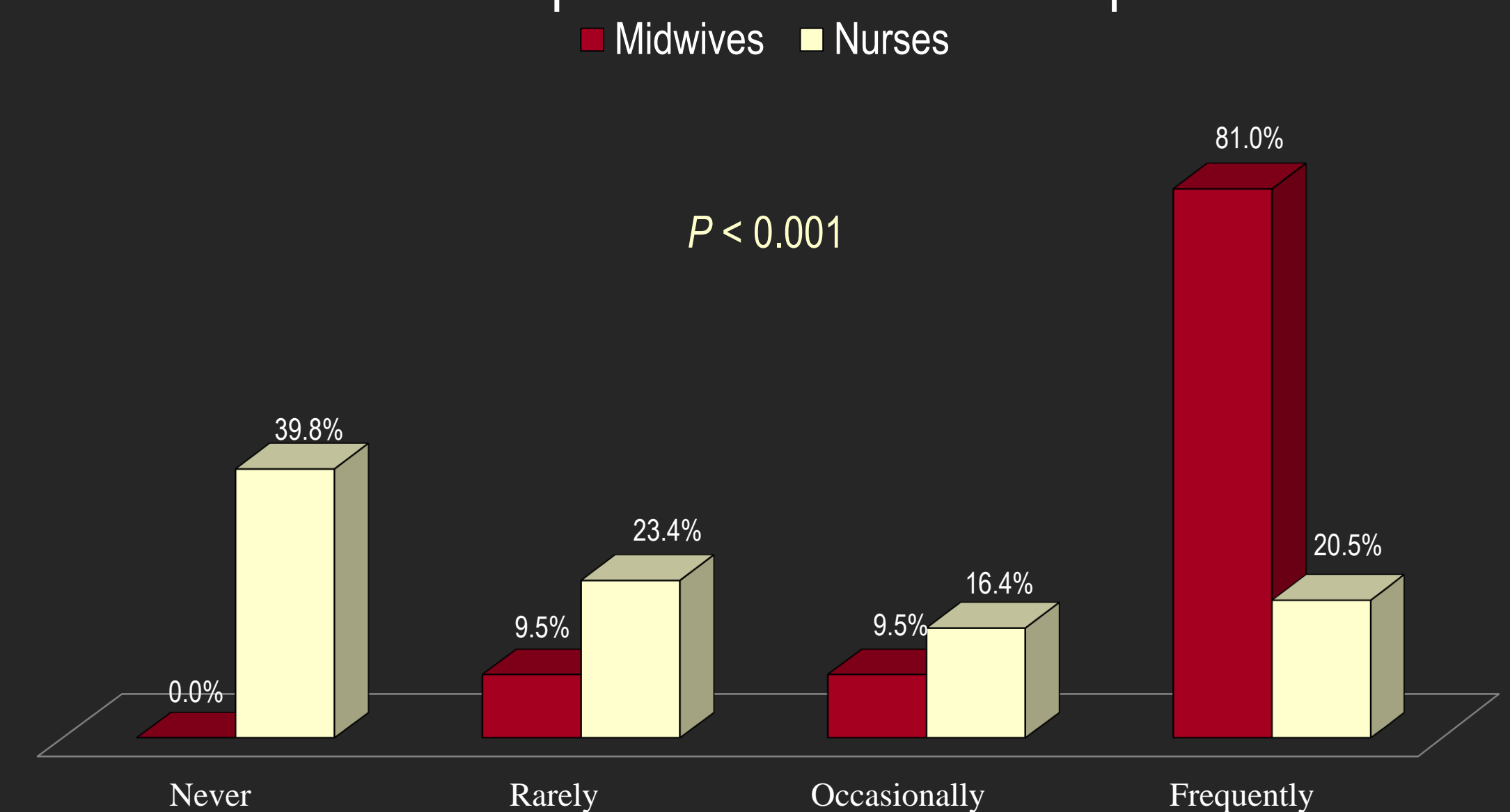


Figure 3. Comparison of nurses' and midwives' use of interpreters for complex care

Conclusion

These findings confirm previous studies that suggest some nurses are choosing not to use professional healthcare interpreters. The lack of training on how to access and work with healthcare interpreters, and the increased use of healthcare interpreters by those with higher postgraduate qualifications could explain these findings and further studies should explore the reasons for this.



References

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