



# Embracing Attention and Empathy Through Narrative Medicine in the Third Year Family Medicine Clerkship

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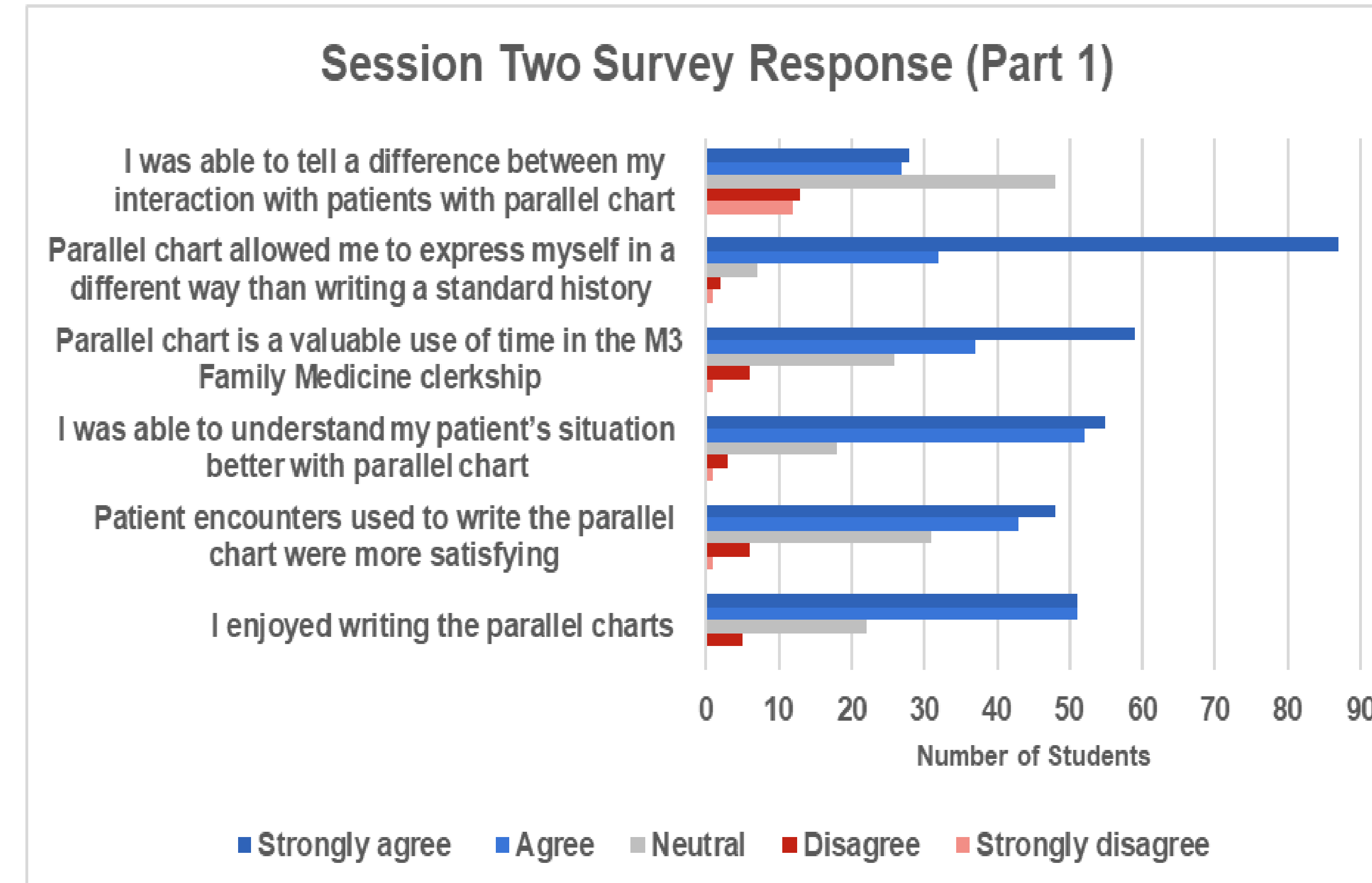
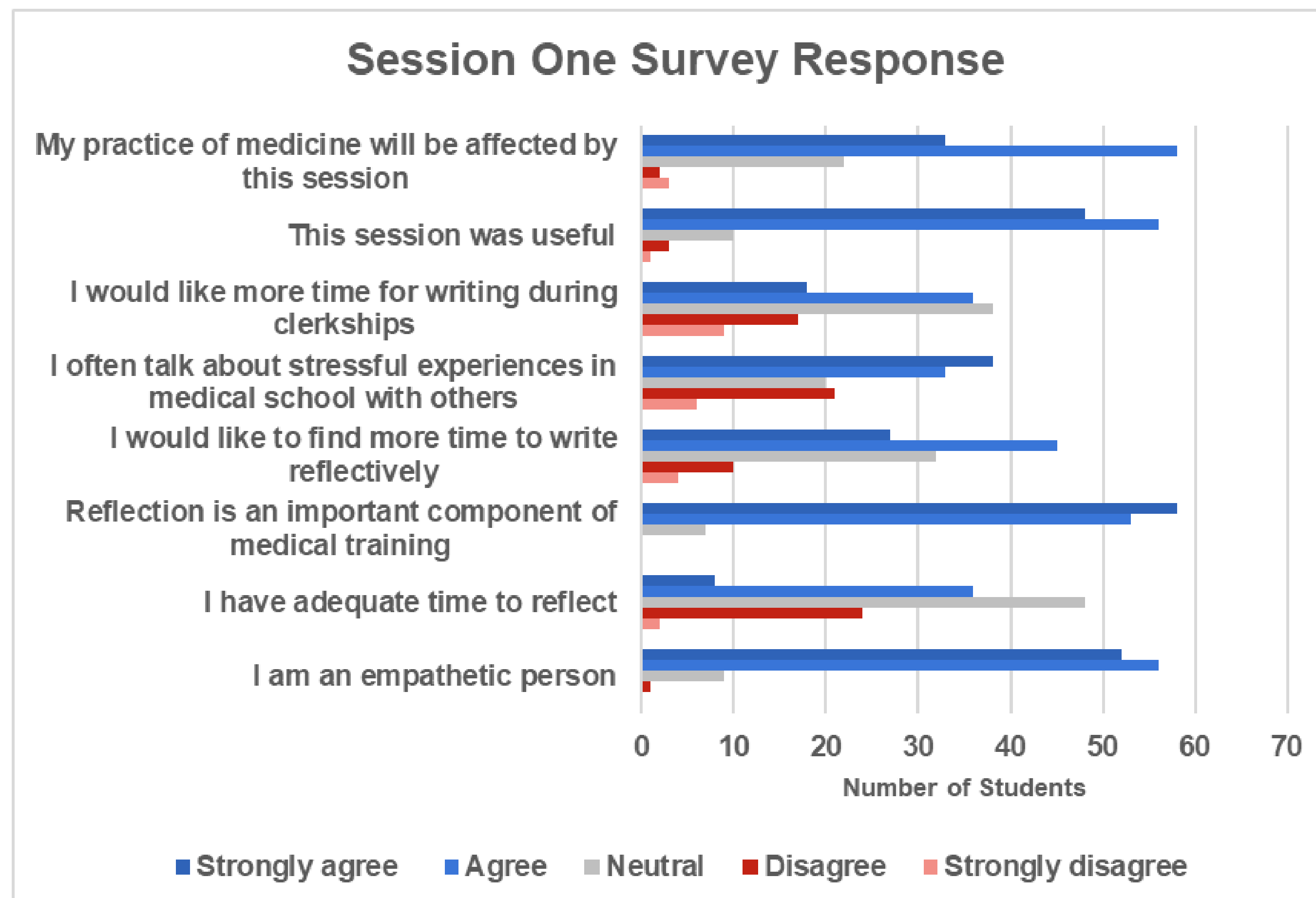
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## INTRODUCTION

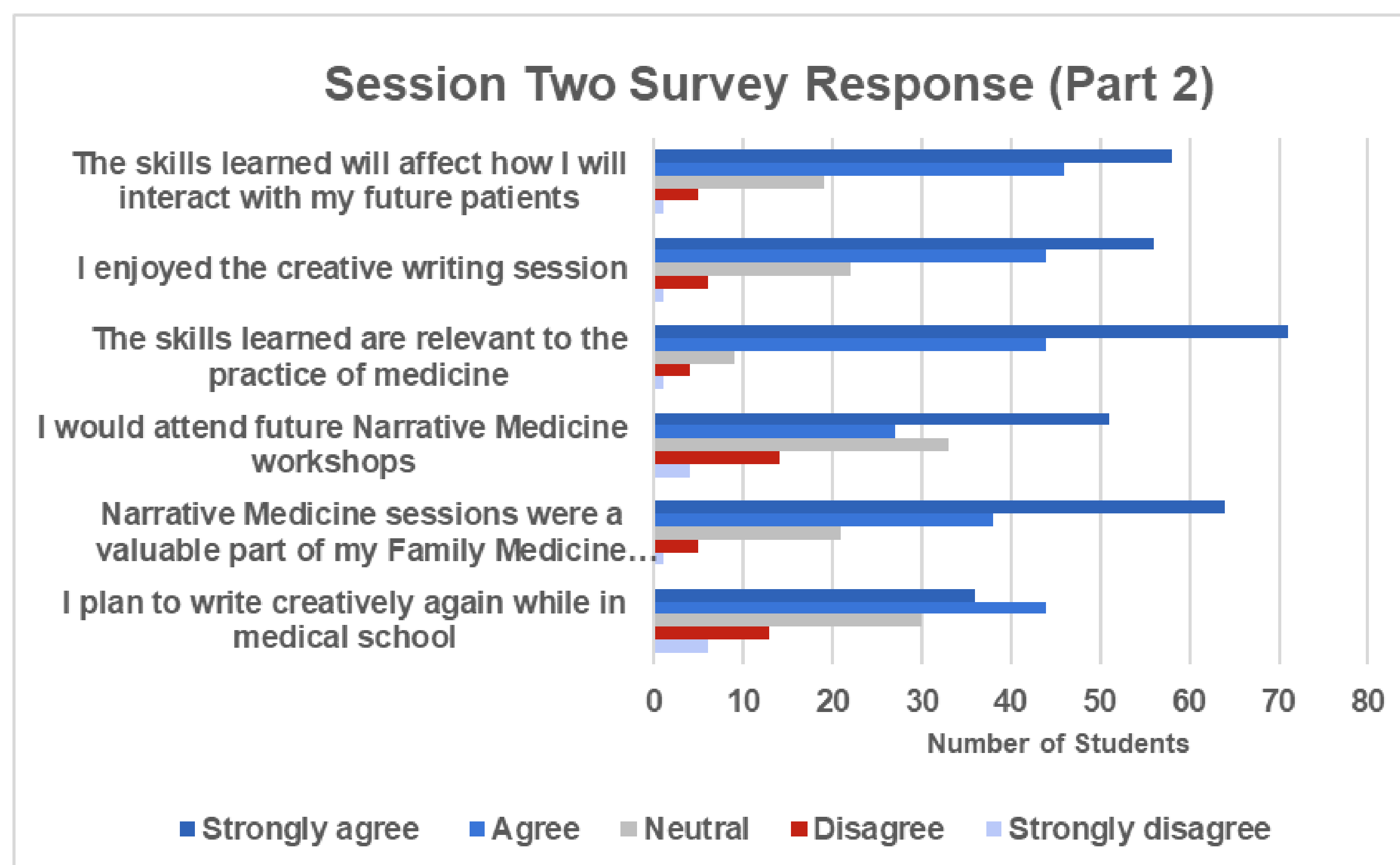
- Narrative Medicine as a discipline has not been a fundamental aspect of the medical school curriculum at Brody School of Medicine.
- There is a need to replace hurried and impersonal care with careful listening and empathetic attention.
- With limited research across medical schools in the United States, there is a lack of concrete models to assess what students gain from such teachings.
- This study aimed to cultivate attention and empathy through creative writing sessions and parallel charts to evaluate how they translate into student's understanding of strengthening their therapeutic alliance with patients.

## RESULTS



## MATERIALS & METHODS

- 165 students rotated through the family medicine clerkship in twelve cohorts
- First week: creative writing session one with reflective writing prompts: introduction of the tenets of narrative medicine and parallel charts
- During clerkship: students complete parallel charts on two patients focusing on aspects of the patient not in their medical records
- Last week: creative writing session two with reflective writing prompts and sharing of parallel charts
- 5-point Likert scale survey and qualitative survey used to assess student's perception towards activities and desired goal.



## DISCUSSION

- Students rated themselves highly on being empathetic after the first session, however, these sessions allowed students to focus on their capacity to represent their experiences in a written manner.
- The results support the aim of the study and validate the worth of these sessions in helping students embrace empathy as it relates to their future patients.
- Another theme that emerged throughout the sessions was how students connected with one another which was not initially expected as group dynamics were not explored. Some groups seemed to be more engaging with one another than others.
- The greatest challenge is organizational buy in to have two separate sessions during one clerkship, however the results support the perceived relevance of these sessions to the students' future practice.
- Given the connectivity element, narrative medicine could be explored to promote wellness within groups in high stress environments.

## REFERENCES

- Charon, R., Dasgupta, S., Hermann, N., Irvine, C., Marcus, E. R., Colón, E. R., Spencer, D., & Spiegel, M. (2017). The principles and practice of Narrative Medicine. Oxford University Press.
- Zaharias G. (2018). What is narrative-based medicine? Narrative-based medicine 1. Canadian family physician Medecin de famille canadien, 64(3), 176–180.

- Theme coding the qualitative survey responses yielded several themes including:

**EMPATHY - VULNERABILITY - COMMUNICATION  
EMOTIONAL - LISTEN**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- **The Brody School of Medicine Distinction Track Program** for providing funding to attend the virtual Narrative Medicine Conference through Columbia University Department of Medical Humanities and Ethics
- **Rita Charon**, MD, PhD, pioneer of Narrative Medicine

*“.....just a reminder to know a patient's whole story and that they're a person” – Student response*