

Evaluating the use of online support groups in those with abnormal placental implantation at King Edward Memorial Hospital

ARSHAD A, SCAFFIDI J, EPEE-BEKIMA M

KING EDWARD MEMORIAL HOSPITAL, SUBIACO, WA
UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA, PERTH, WA

INTRODUCTION

Evidence suggests that web-based support groups have significant positive impacts on patients and their families, with a range of advantages including flexibility, privacy and access to information.

Abnormal placental implantation is a medical condition leading to adverse short-term and long-term health outcomes for patients. While no formal face-to-face support groups exist, there are numerous online support groups accessible to patients and their families.

This study aims to assess the access, use and utility of online support groups for patients diagnosed with placenta accreta spectrum at King Edward Memorial Hospital and cared for by a dedicated team.

METHODS

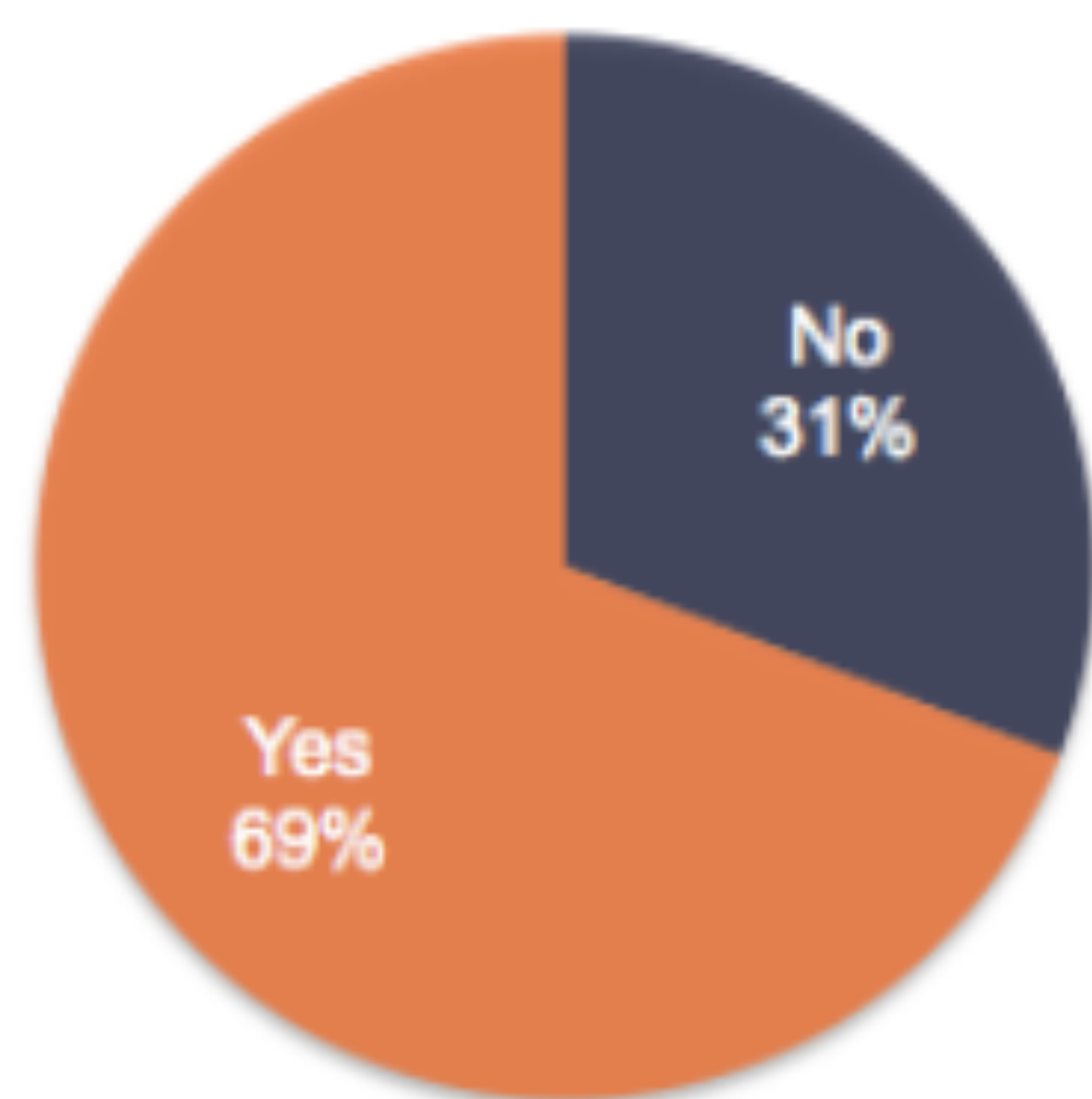
This is a retrospective study. Questionnaires were posted to the women who were diagnosed with placenta accreta spectrum disorder in the last 3 years, with those who did not respond offered a phone interview. Out of 38 women, 15 responded (2 via return questionnaire and 13 via phone interview).

RESULTS

Overall, participants thought that online support groups provided a positive experience in addition to their usual antenatal care. Facebook online support groups were the most common platform and women found that the emotional support provided via the online support groups was the most helpful, followed by preparing them for delivery and recovery (Graph 1 and 2). Approximately 69% of the participants agreed that they would recommend the online support groups to other women in similar situation (Figure 1).

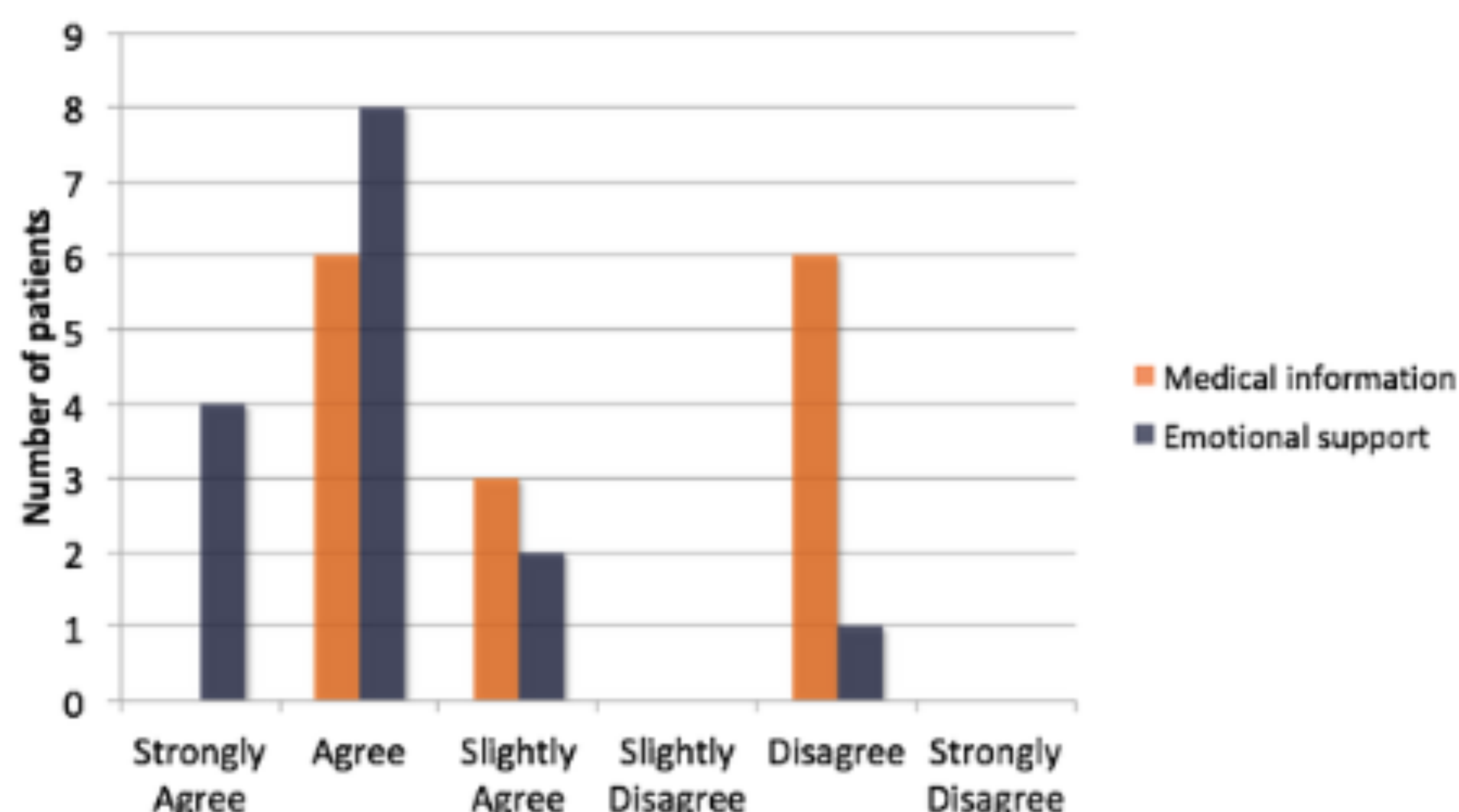
FIGURE 1

Percentage of patients who would recommend online support groups to women suffering from similar medical conditions.



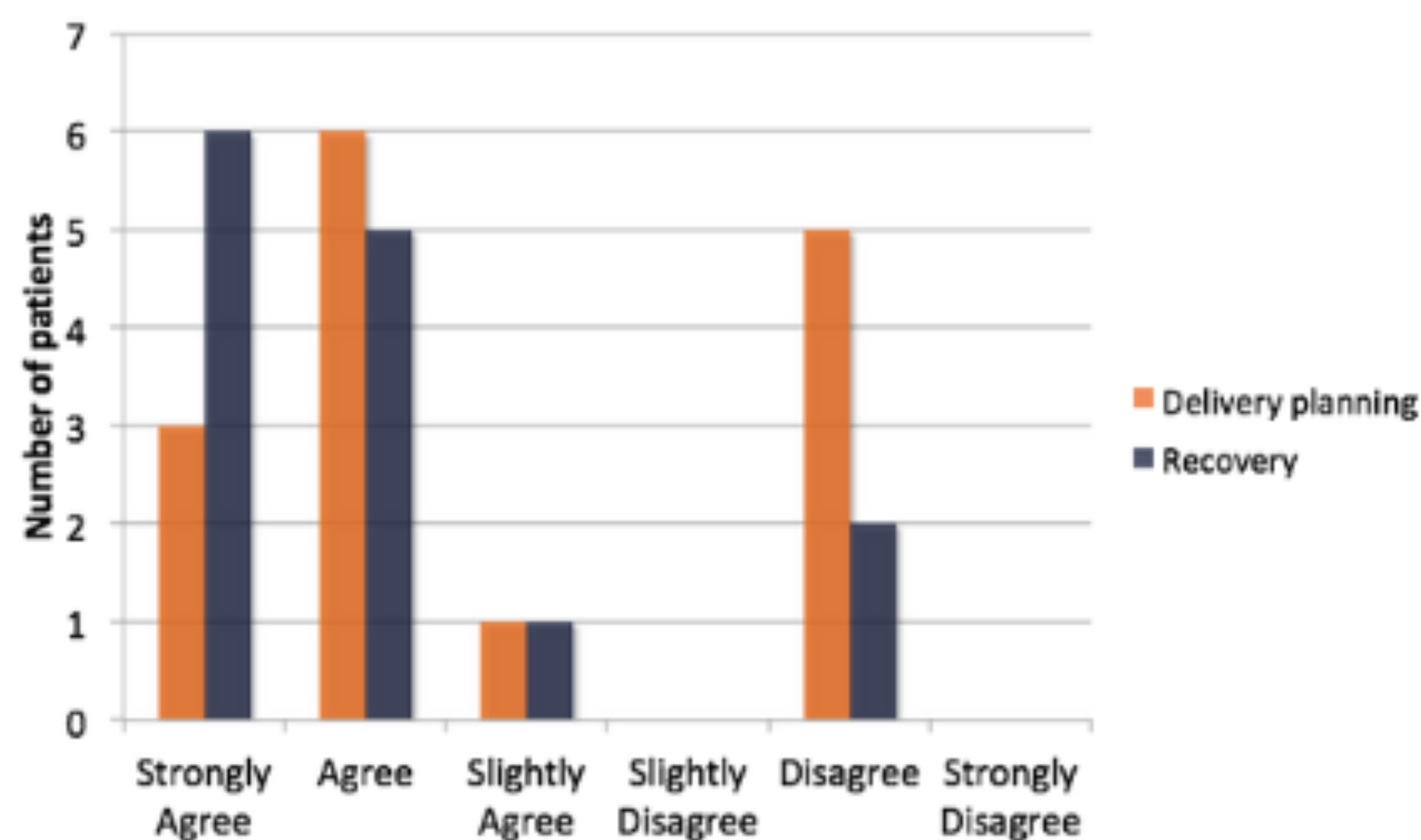
GRAPH 1

Questionnaire responses: The medical information/emotional support provided via the online support group was helpful



GRAPH 2

Questionnaire responses: The online support group helped me in my delivery planning and/or recovery.



DISCUSSION

Our data suggests that while women were commonly trying to access further information and support (>50% of our participants), not many were aware of the availability of online support groups.

Importantly, it seems the medical information provided was adequate, however patients were lacking in psychological and emotional support which was effectively and positively provided by the online groups. While our data is limited by small participant numbers, the overall positive reception can encourage further research into the utility of online support groups. Additionally, we can recommend them to patients as a positive tool in their medical journey allowing them the added benefits of privacy, flexibility and availability of access.

EMAIL: AYESHA.ARSHAD@HEALTH.WA.GOV.AU