

# Using virtual case-based discussions to engage medical students interested in emergency medicine during a global pandemic

David Fine MD<sup>1</sup>, Morgan D. Wilbanks, MD<sup>1</sup>,

Medical College of Wisconsin Department of Emergency Medicine<sup>1</sup>

*\*No conflicts of interest exist*

## Objectives and Background

Due to restrictions on in-person activities due to COVID-19, students are unable to gather for in-person interest group meetings and are unable to shadow in the Emergency Department (ED). This has anecdotally resulted in a decrease in overall activities among interest groups and we presume has harmed students' ability to engage with specialties as they determine their career interests.

A recurring lecture series had been established by a faculty member and resident that aimed to give EM exposure to first and second-year students and recreate many of the learning experiences that may happen during shadowing including:

- Discussion of real patient cases, guiding students through the presentation, resuscitation, and outcomes.
- Review of diagnostic studies pertaining to the case
- Conversations about unique challenges of working in EM, maintaining wellness in the specialty, and other discussions about the realities of working in EM.

The aim of this project is to use survey data to assess how well these programs achieved their aims.

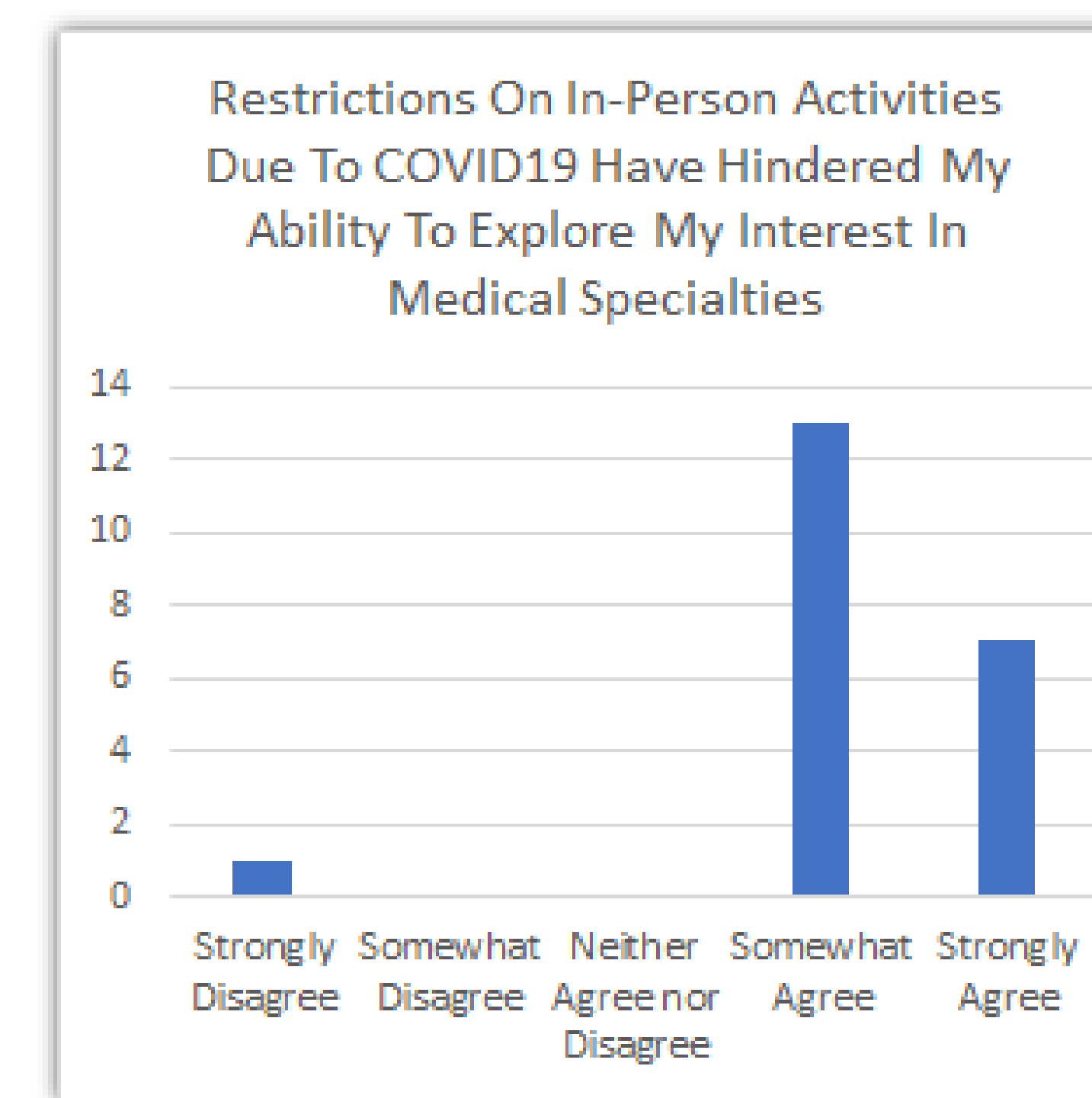
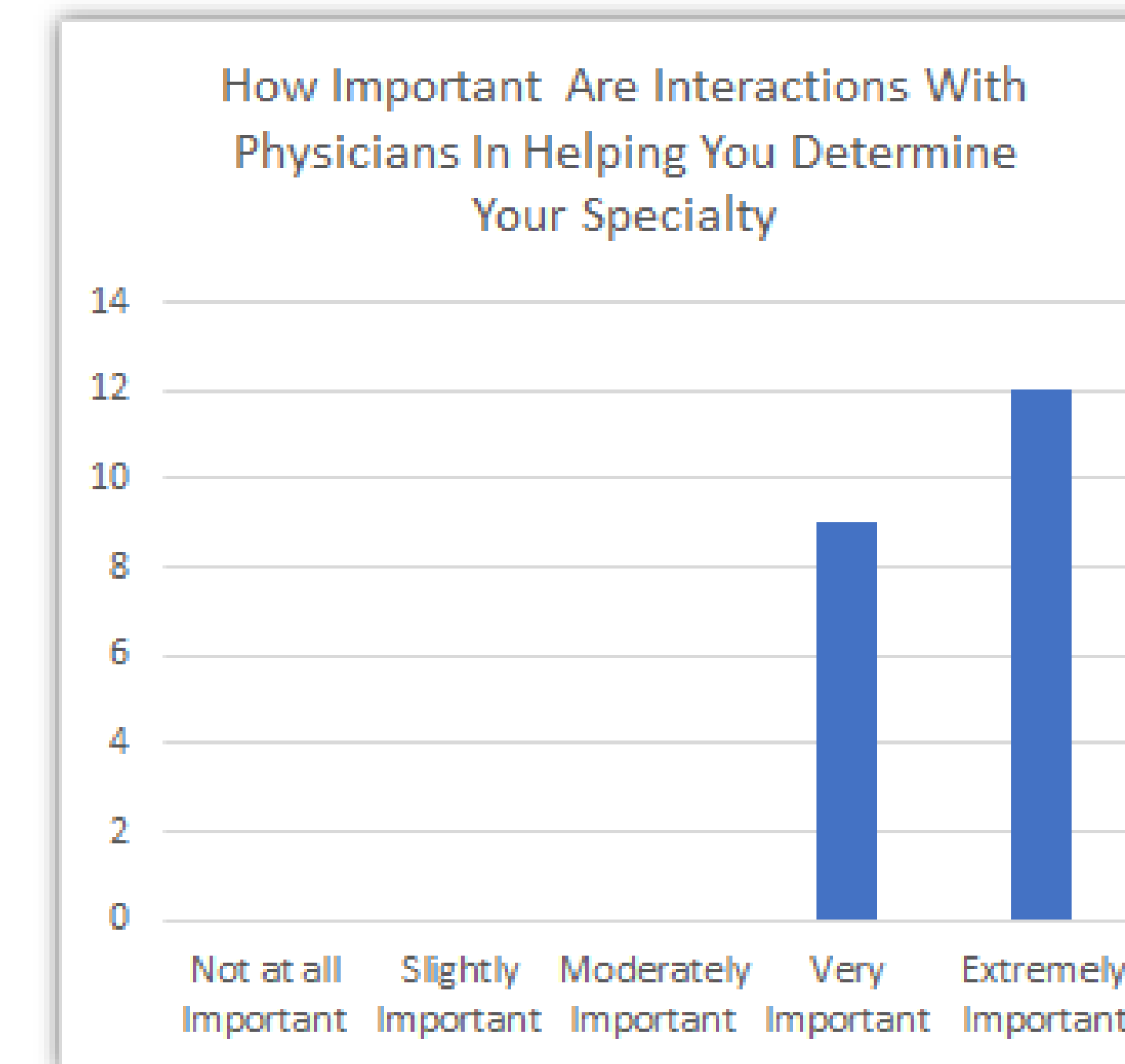
This project was approved by the MCW Department of Emergency Medicine Quality Improvement Committee.

## Methods

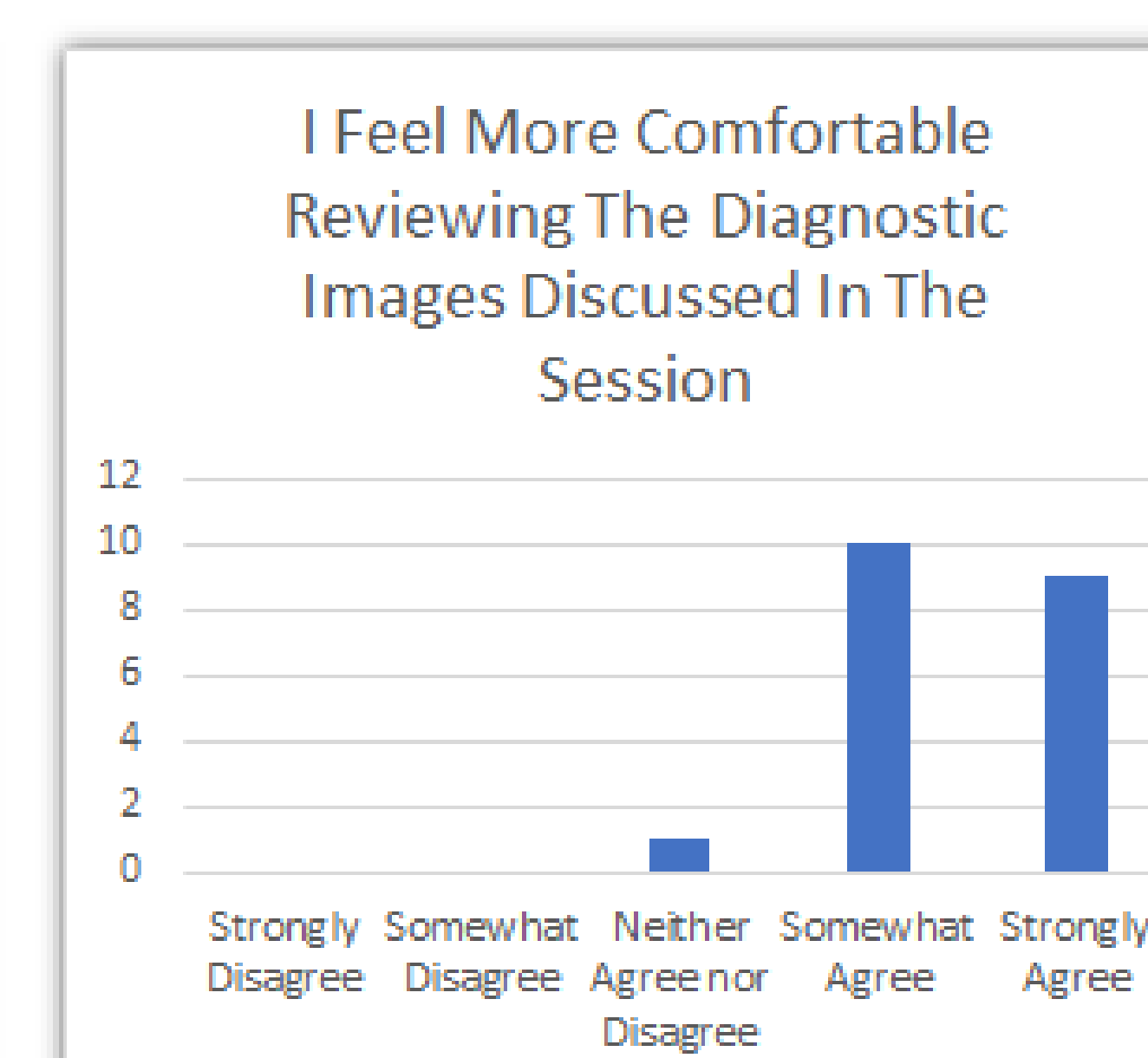
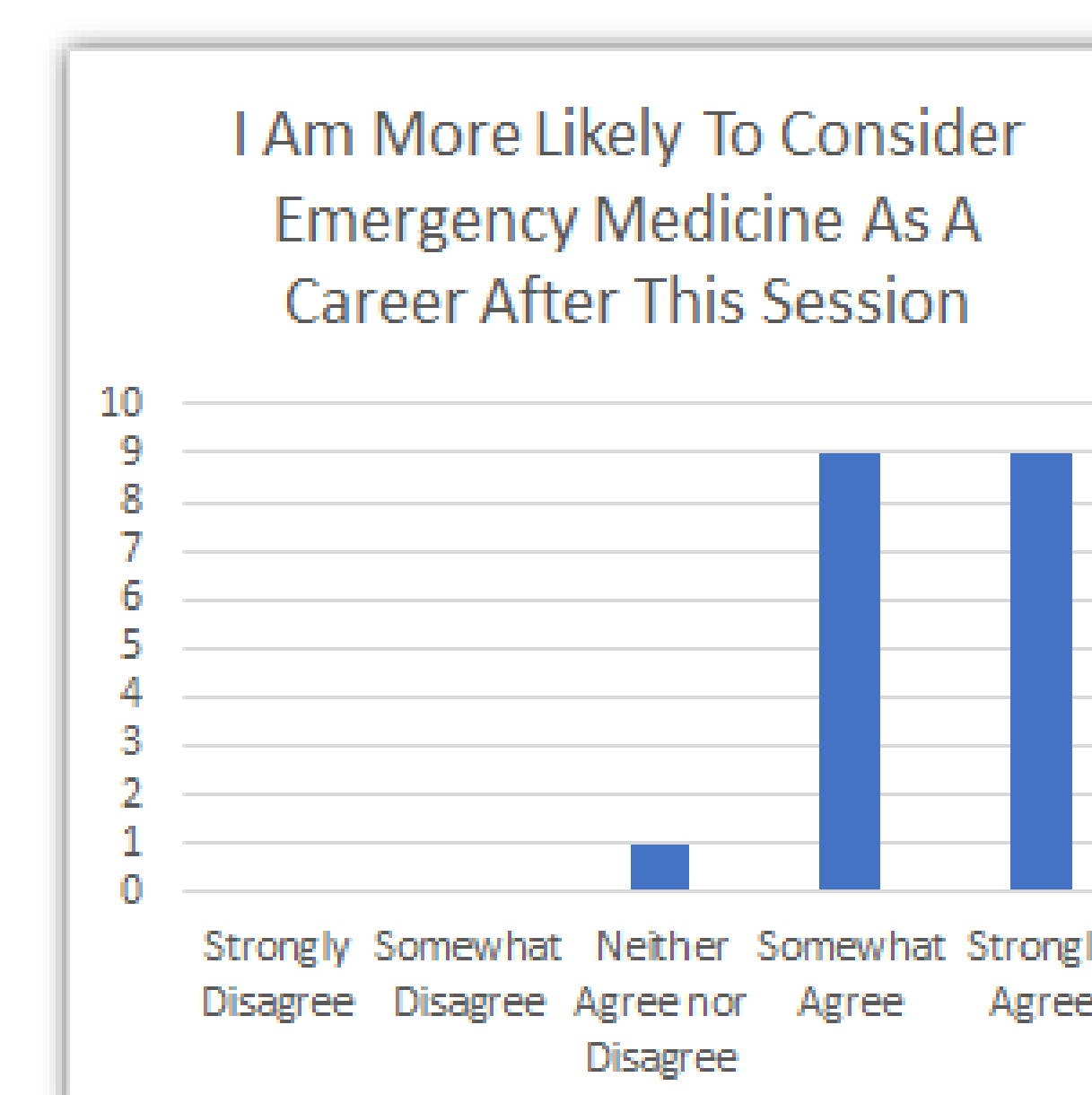
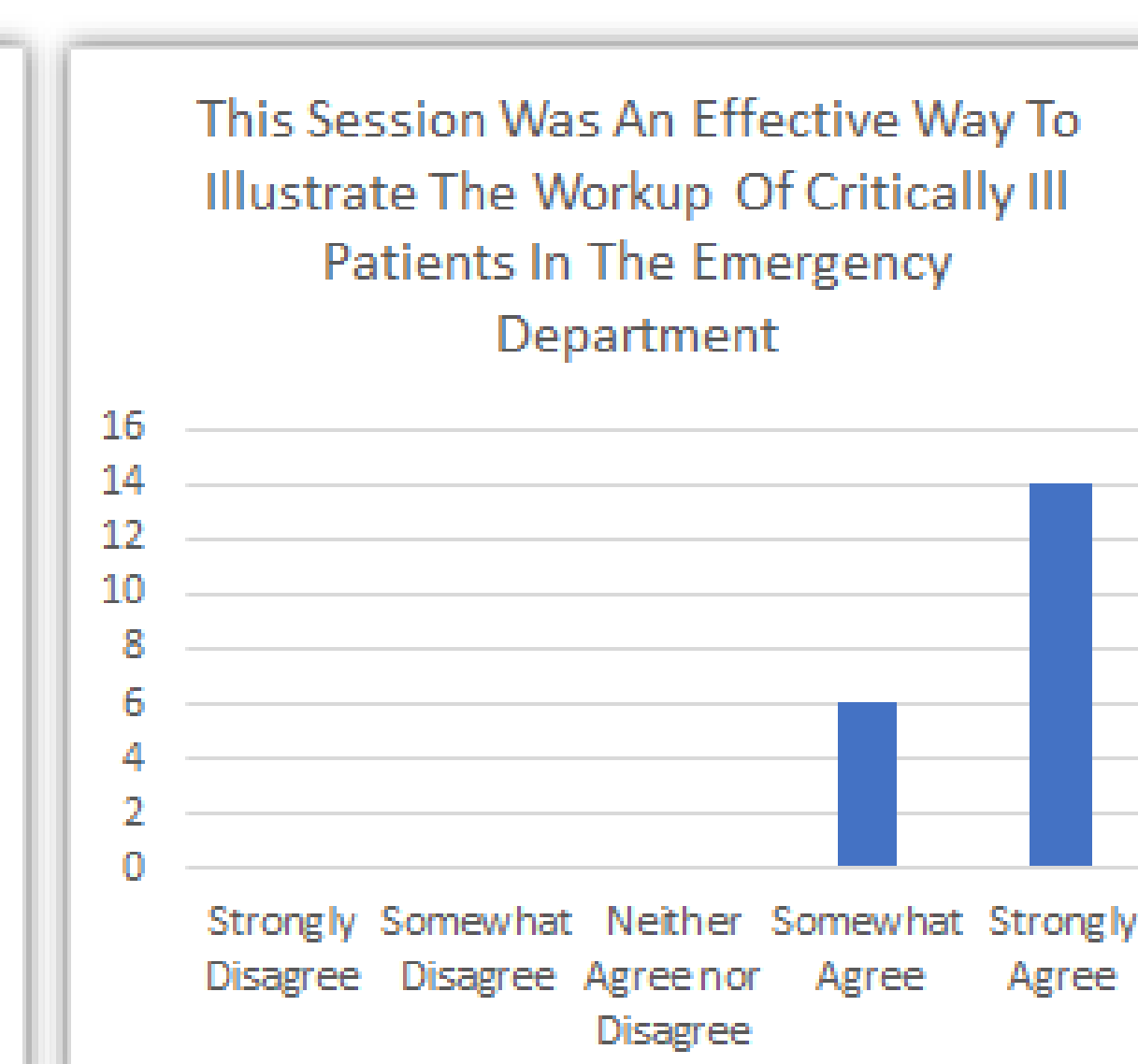
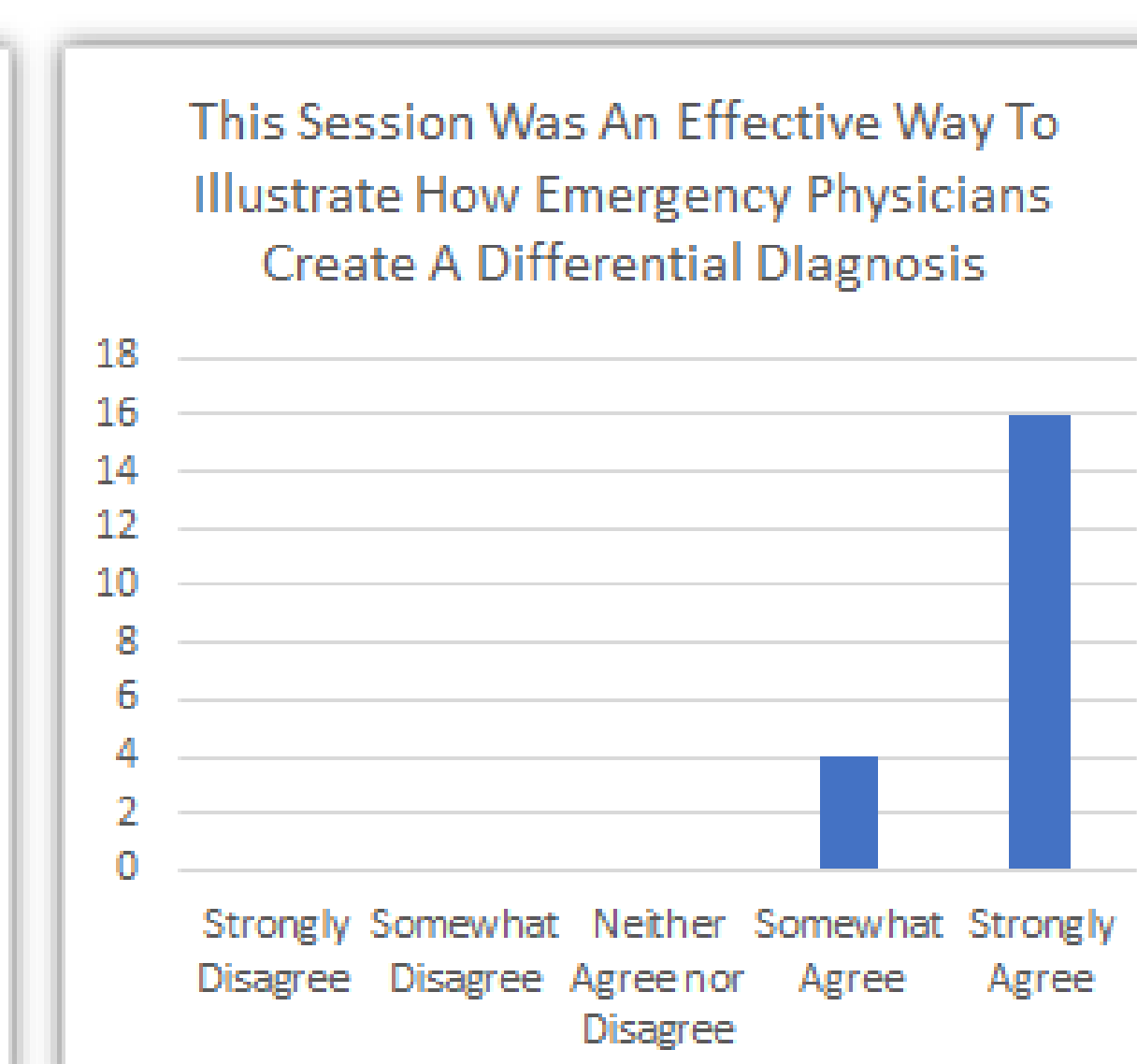
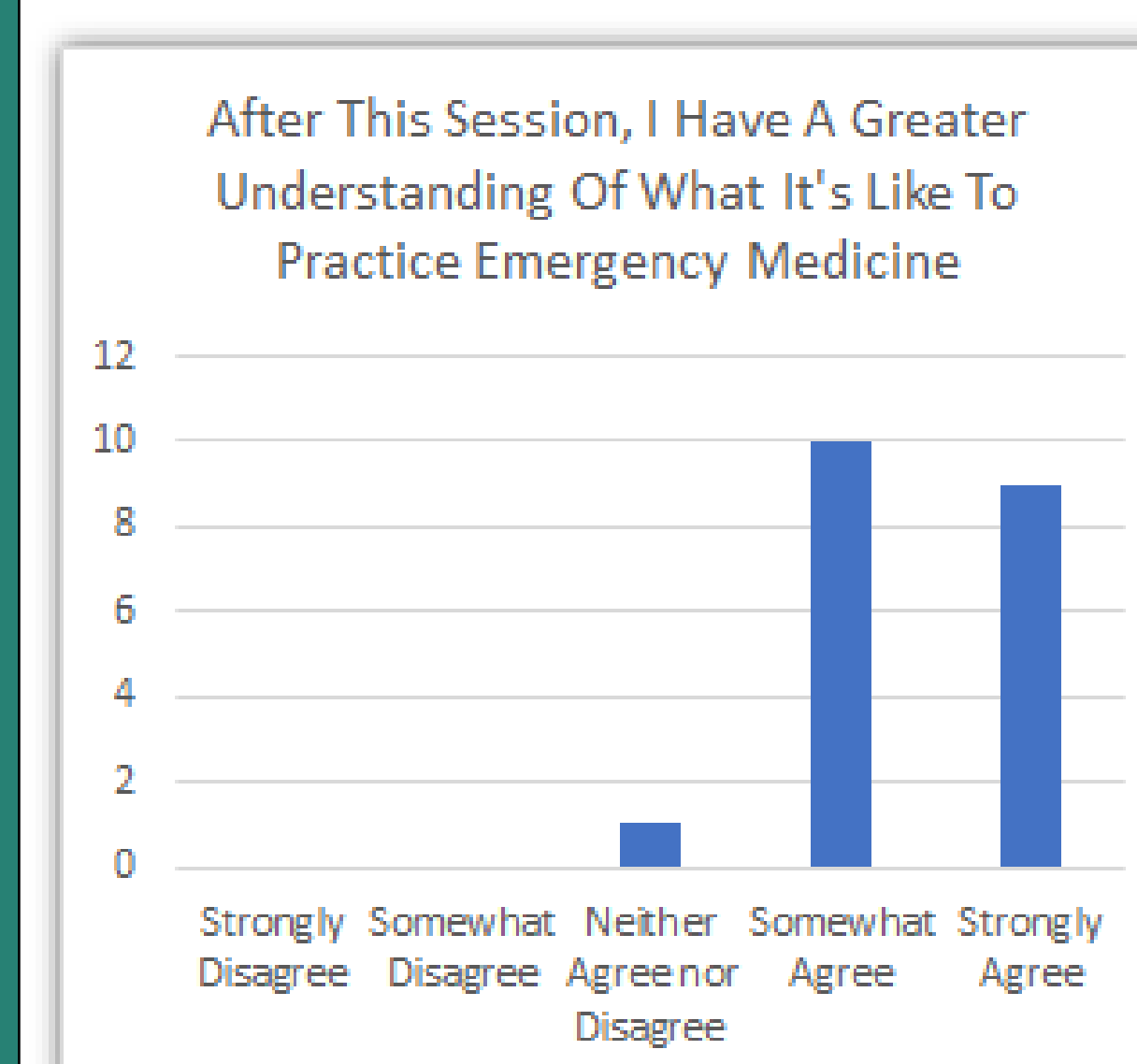
Before and after each session, there are surveys for students to fill out which ask questions to assess how interested they are in EM, how involved they have been in interest group activities, the effect of COVID-19 restrictions, and how well the sessions portray the practice of EM and their likelihood to consider EM. Pre-discussion surveys are meant to be completed only once by each student. Post surveys are to be completed after each session by each attendee.

## Pre Survey

Participants		
M1		16
M1		5
Interest in EM		
Very Uninterested		0
Somewhat Uninterested		0
Neither		1
Somewhat Interested		8
Very Interested		12
Specialty-related events attended this year		
1 event		5
2 events		1
3 events		3
4 events		2
>5 events		10



## Post Survey



## Results

There were 21 total pre-survey responses. Students were instructed not to fill out a pre-survey more than once if they attend multiple sessions. 20/21 respondents were very or somewhat interested in emergency medicine. The vast majority of respondents agreed that the restrictions had made them feel less engaged with both emergency medicine as a specialty and the practice of medicine in general. All respondents expressed that interactions with physicians in that specialty are helpful in students determining their specialty.

There were a total of 20 post-session surveys completed. The majority (19/20) of students expressed agreement to having a greater understanding of practicing EM. All respondents felt that the sessions were an effective way to illustrate the differential diagnosis, workup, and treatment of critically ill patients. Of the 19 students who had not decided on a specialty other than EM, 18 said they were more likely to consider a career in EM after the session.

## Conclusions

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed multiple restrictions on clinical, academic, and personal activities. One consequence of these restrictions is that students are less able to explore their interests via the tradition in-person activities open to students, namely shadowing and interest groups. These are opportunities for students to gain real-world insight into the practice of EM and are important avenues for students to explore their interests. We feel that our case discussion sessions play an important role in helping students learn about EM while these restrictions remain in place.

## Next Steps

Further data should be gathered regarding additional effects of COVID-19 on student career exploration and their academic development in general. These sessions were well received by students and are planned to continue through the academic year and likely in some form after restrictions on in-person gatherings are lifted.