The Power of Positivity:
The impact of patient feedback on obstetric anaesthetists

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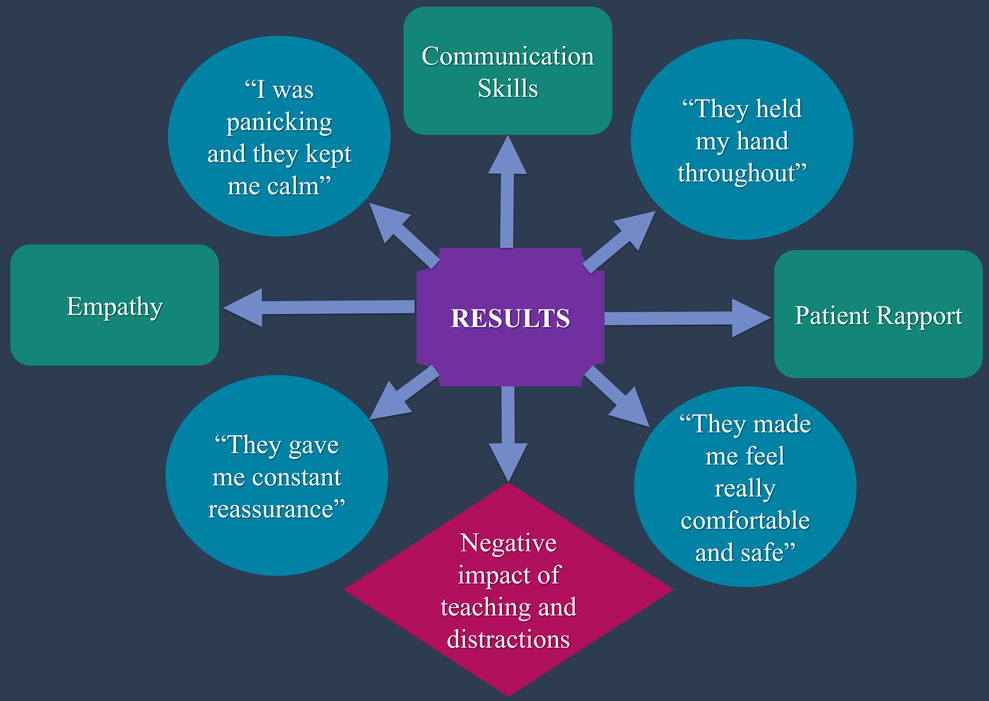
Introduction

- Mental health of NHS workers is at an all time low[1]
- Burnout levels are high[1]
- Anaesthetists are a vulnerable group for multiple reasons, especially as they are often the 'unsung heroes[2]
- Anaesthetists play a key role in the patient experience in obstetrics[2]
- East Kent Hospitals Maternity department has been under scrutiny following the Kirkup Report
- In times of scrutiny, it is important to acknowledge not only the areas for improvement, but also the aspects that staff are doing well

Methodology

- In May 2022, EKHUFT implemented the "Your Voice is Heard" project
- Aimed to ascertain feedback on women's birth experiences 6 weeks after delivery
- 12 point structured questionnaire with open and closed questions, conducted by telephone
- No questions specifically asked about anaesthetic care
- When feedback is elicited about an anaesthetic interaction, this is transcribed and relayed back to the relevant anaesthetist



Results

- 1325 women interviewed since the commencement of the project
- Only 37 (2.8%) of patients volunteered feedback related to their anaesthetic intervention
- 35 positive
- 2 negative
- Almost no emphasis placed on clinical skills/abilities

Discussion

- Personalised feedback has an extremely positive impact on the anaesthetists involved
- "It made their day"
- Women remember anaesthetists for their 'softer skills', rather than technical ability
- Clinical competence is expected by patients
- Empathetic communication, reassurance and a patient centred approach are valued highly by women
- Feedback provides scope to:
  - improve service delivery
  - provide evidence and reflection for appraisal
  - boost team morale and wellbeing

References

[1] Kinman and Teoh. What could make a difference to the mental health of UK doctors? A review of the research evidence. Technical report. Society of Occupa onal Medicine and the Louise Tebboth Founda on. 2018
[2] Djagbletey, Aryee, Essuman, et al. Pa ents' knowledge and percep on of anaesthesia and the anaesthe st at a ter ary health care facility in Ghana. *South African Journal of Anaesthesia and Analgesia.* 2017; 23(1): 11-16