

Evaluating the use of pain relief comparison cards on labour ward

Introduction Labouring mothers often face uncertainty when choosing the most suitable analgesic options for pain relief. Many are not fully informed about the available options and rely on healthcare professionals for guidance. The decision-making process is complicated by the overwhelming amount of information provided in clinical settings. Websites like Labour Pains(1) aim to inform expectant mothers with clear, accessible details on pain relief methods. However, a concise, visual comparison tool is needed to aid discussions between patients and the perinatal team. This study assessed the perceived value of a newly developed analgesic comparison card, designed to help healthcare professionals present pain relief options to mothers during labour. The card offers a side-by-side comparison of analgesics; including their benefits, risks, and side effects, helping patients make informed decisions.

Methods Labour Ward Analgesia Comparison cards were created using content from LabourPains (Fig 1). (1) For non-English speaking mothers, each card includes a QR code linking to the LabourPains website, offering the same information in multiple languages. These cards were introduced at Queen Elizabeth University Hospital and encouraged for use by the perinatal team when discussing analgesic options. After two weeks, a survey was sent to midwives, obstetricians, and anaesthetists to gather feedback on the cards’ utility and assess whether this patient education tool was effective and if it should be used in the future.

Results The voluntary survey was completed by 17 participants. Of these, 94% had used the analgesic comparison cards, with 87.6% incorporating it in most or all cases. 58% introduced the card before the mother requested analgesia. Over 80% of users felt that labouring mothers found the card useful, and 88% of staff considered it a useful communication tool (Fig 2). Free-text feedback highlighted that the card was most beneficial when introduced early, before significant pain, as some found it overwhelming to present during active labour (Fig 3).



Figure 1: QR Code linking to Pain Relief Comparison Card

“I think the information card looks good and simple and has potential to be utilised well but the 2 times I’ve used it patients have said it’s too much to read during active labour. Perhaps giving it at some point antenatally or at the point of admission to labour ward.”

“Really like this, could we have one specifically for mothers who have losses”

“Very clear and helpful, think women should be able to see it before they are in labour (up on ward or in clinic)”

Figure 3: Free-Text Feedback

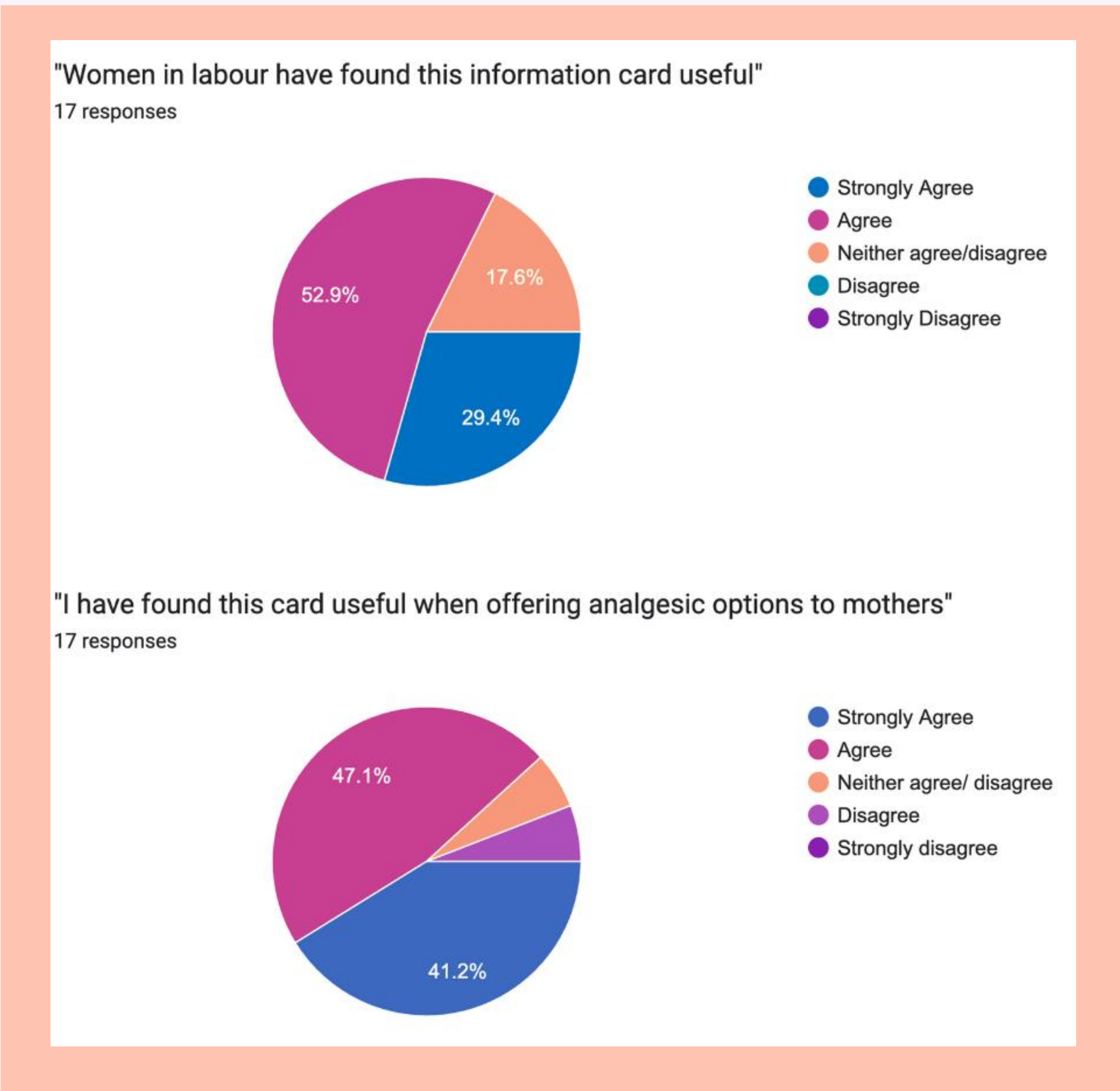


Figure 2: Results of Survey

Conclusion The analgesia comparison card has proven valuable, simplifying the process of informing mothers about pain relief options and empowering them to make more informed decisions during labour. Future improvements could include creating a version for pregnancy loss and offering the card earlier in pregnancy.

1. Labourpains.org. Labour Pains: A guide to pain relief in labour. Available at: <https://www.labourpains.org/>. Accessed [24/01/2024].