



# A playful approach to health education

‘Dr Me’ was designed by Dr Chee Yeen Fung in 2020, as a widening participation and health promotion project. The aim is to raise awareness of what school children should do when they are ill or injured. This project adopts Fung (2020) findings, and applies them to the local primary schools in Dundee. Our project involved Year 2 medical students teaching the children about when to use self-care measures at home for minor ailments and when to access healthcare.



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## Introduction

The University of Dundee has been collaborating with local primary schools through the ‘Dr Me’ Project. This widening participation project delivers teaching on self-care for common self-limiting illnesses, increases awareness of NHS resources, and inspires children to pursue healthcare careers (Fung, 2020).

Recent research suggests that patients who are educated about their symptoms are less likely to present inappropriately to a medical setting (Little, 2001). Additionally, (Martin et al., 2018) suggested that medical outreach projects in primary schools are a highly effective way to teach children about a career in medicine.

## Aim

The aims of the project are to evaluate the effectiveness of this primary school outreach programme, and whether this provides educational benefits for medical students and health awareness benefits for primary school children.



Figure 3- Ellie inspiring a visitor



Figure 2- Teddy bear activity

## Method

We organised 1-hour workshops on minor ailments, which were delivered by medical students in local primary schools to children aged 9-11. Six primary schools across Dundee, and thirty-two primary school classes took part in this project.

Teaching on content, delivery techniques and workshop design was provided to Year 2 medical students, facilitated by BMSc Medical Education students. Students designed presentations to use on topics such as sore throat and fever, vomiting and diarrhoea, head injuries and minor sprains. The school workshops started with an interactive quiz to gauge the primary children's prior knowledge. After this, they split the children into three small groups to complete their presentations on various minor ailments and self-care. Finally, they repeated the interactive quiz to measure the students' learning.

After these sessions, we collected feedback from the primary students (n=297), Primary school teachers (n=5) and Year 2 medical students (n=93), which highlighted the strengths and limitations of this project.

## Results

Overall, results showed that this project has been an enjoyable experience for the vast majority (93%) of the primary school children, and improved their knowledge of the aforementioned ailments (87%) (Figure 1).

Furthermore, the primary teachers stated that the Dr Me project helped them cover their curriculum and they would see benefit in further collaboration with Dundee Medical School.

Medical students involved with the project also found the project beneficial for their communication skills (Figure 4) and felt more confident at managing common paediatric minor illnesses as a result (Figure 5).

Figures 2, and 3 show examples of the activities used during ‘Dr Me’ sessions.

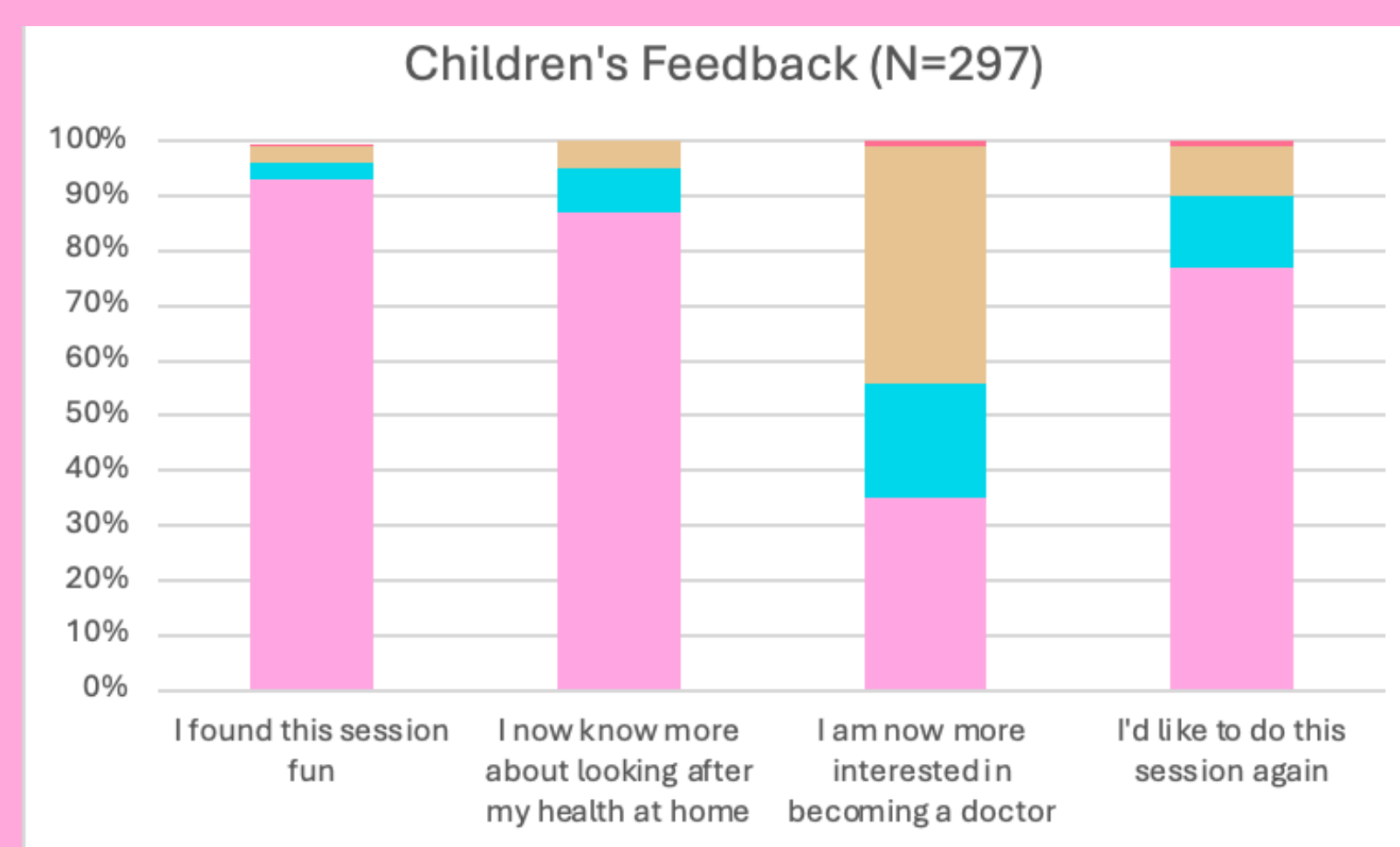


Figure 1- Overall primary school children's feedback

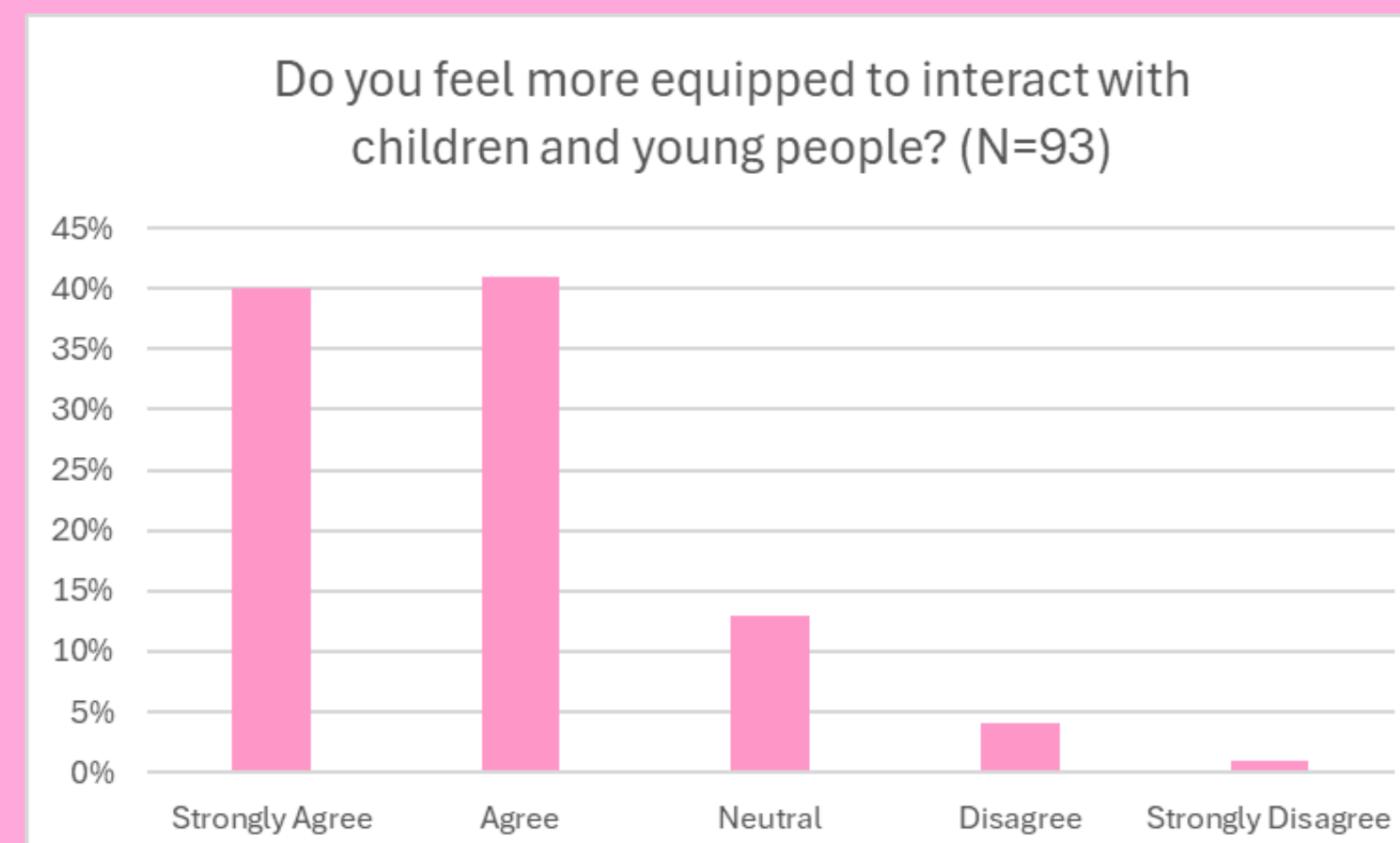


Figure 4- Feedback from medical students

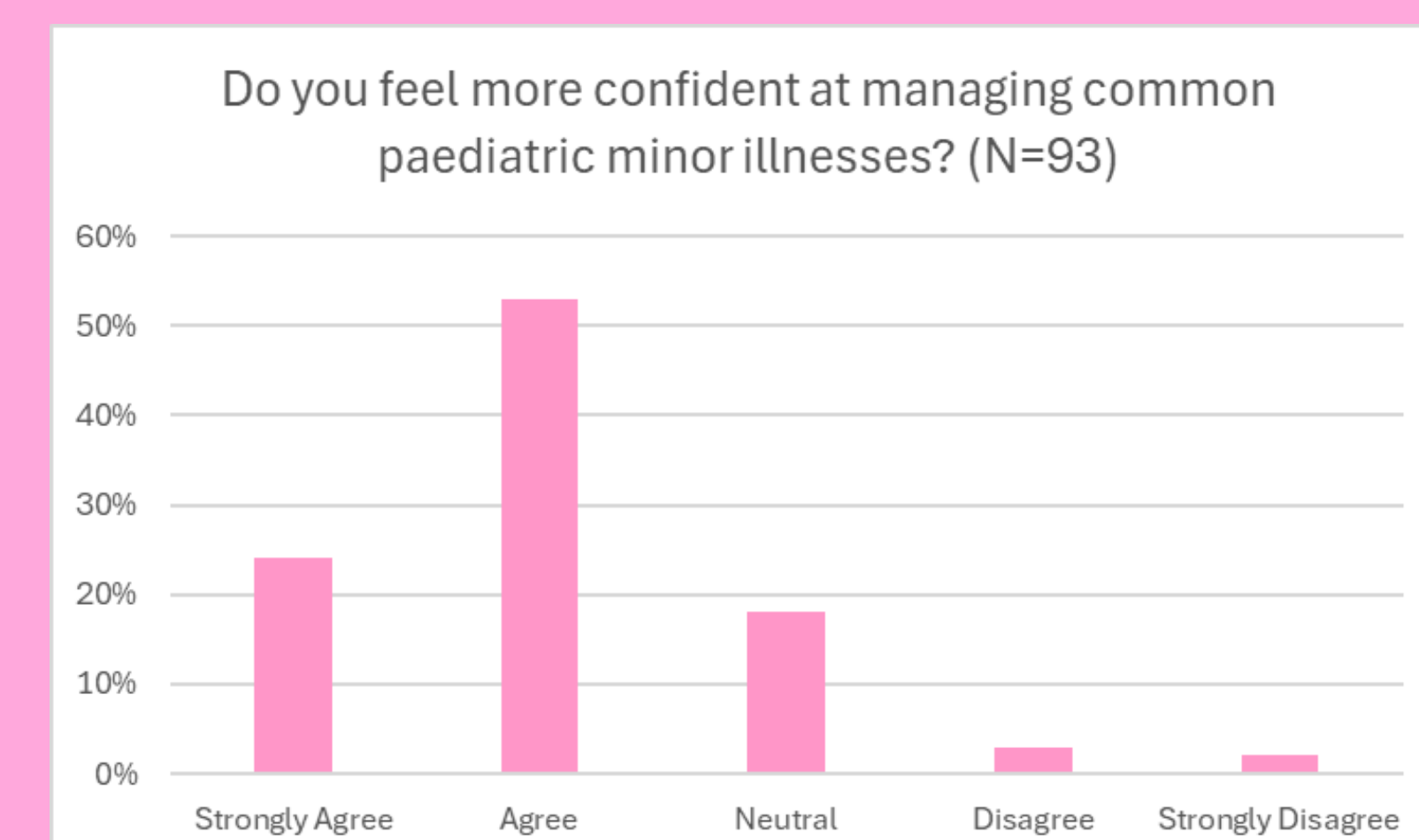


Figure 5 - Feedback from medical students

## Discussion

Overall, this project has been shown to be beneficial for both primary school pupils and medical students. The project helped to improve children's knowledge of how to treat their minor ailments. Given Little's (2001) research, this could reduce the number of patients presenting to healthcare settings with these illnesses and therefore reduce the workload on the healthcare system. The workshops increased children's interest in becoming doctors - 56% of children were more interested/maybe interested in becoming a doctor. This is consistent with previous research conducted by Fung (2020) in London.

Providing teaching to primary schools can improve medical students' communication skills and teaching skills (Muir et al., 2017). This is important as these are vital skills for their future careers as around 1/4 of all GP consultations are for children (Saxena, Francis and Sharland, 2012). Additionally, around 7.1 million adults in the UK have a literacy level of 9 years old or below (Gursul, 2022). Therefore, it is important to be able to explain medical terminology in a simple jargon-free way. Medical students who participated in this teaching said they felt more confident communicating with kids and had a better understanding of paediatric medical management.

Future plans include ongoing integration of ‘Dr Me’ into the medical school curriculum and expansion of the project to further primary schools in the local area, with the aim of providing this teaching opportunity to every primary school child in Dundee.

“The DR Me Project should be in all second level classes.  
-Primary School Teacher



“ I really enjoyed the session and I feel I know more about looking after myself once ill and where to go if I'm ill!”  
-Primary school pupil



“[I learnt] how to interact with young people and how best to explain medical conditions to them in simple understandable terms”  
- Medical student

