

Occupational Therapy Fatigue Group: Evaluating outcomes and patient experience

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Aims

- To evaluate effectiveness of the fatigue group by reviewing and analysing patient reported outcome measures (PROM) on C19 YRS app, and understanding patients’ experience.

Introduction

Fatigue continues to be the most common symptom reported as part of individuals’ experience of Long Covid (ref 1). Group-based therapy formats offer the opportunity to share one’s experience with others, and to develop alternative coping strategies together. This helps patients to feel less isolated and helpless (ref 2). Due to increasing Occupational Therapy (OT) referrals within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust (CPFT) Post-Covid Service, group-based self-management therapy was introduced in June 2023 to minimise waiting times.

Process

Information was collated from nine Fatigue Groups conducted on Microsoft Teams and Attend Anywhere between June 2023-July 2024. Group sizes varied from 4-8 participants, facilitated by 1-2 OTs depending on group size. Weekly sessions last 1.5 hrs with 5- to 10-minute break.

Session	Title
Session 1	Fatigue introduction
Session 2	Fatigue management strategies
Session 3	Sleep and management strategies
Session 4	Brain fog and management strategies
Session 5	Review, reflection and next steps.
Session 6	One-to-one online call

Table 1 - overview of sessions

Data was collected retrospectively from 61 participants through Systm1 and C19-YRS app and recorded on excel. Modified Fatigue Impact Scale (MFIS) was used to measure impact of fatigue on participants daily living and Work and Social Adjustment Scale (WSAS) to capture level of impairment from the overlay of mental health symptoms (fig 1).

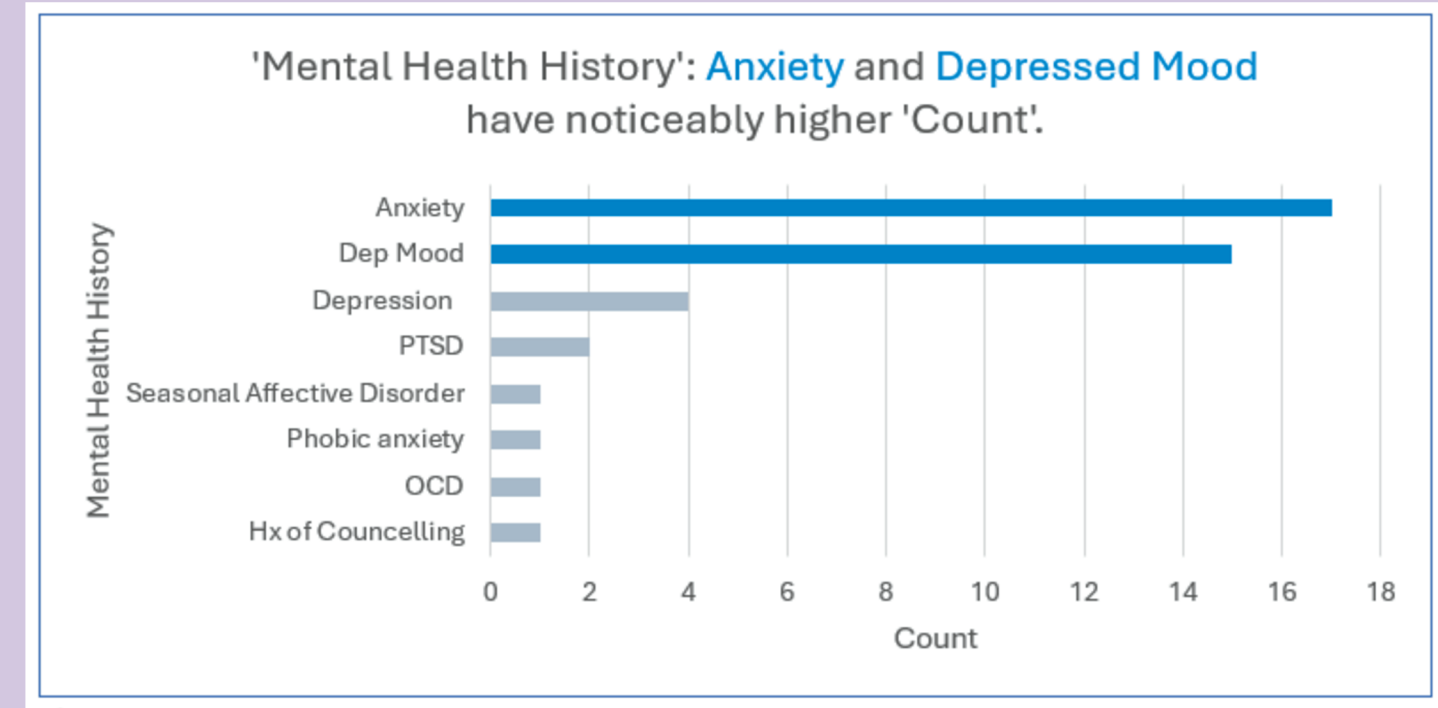


Fig 1

Patient experience was gathered through a local non standardised Fatigue Management Questionnaire (FMQ). A post group online call and anonymous feedback from IQVIA platform (Quintiles and IMS Health, Inc) were also used to gain insight into patient’s group experience.

Discussion and conclusion

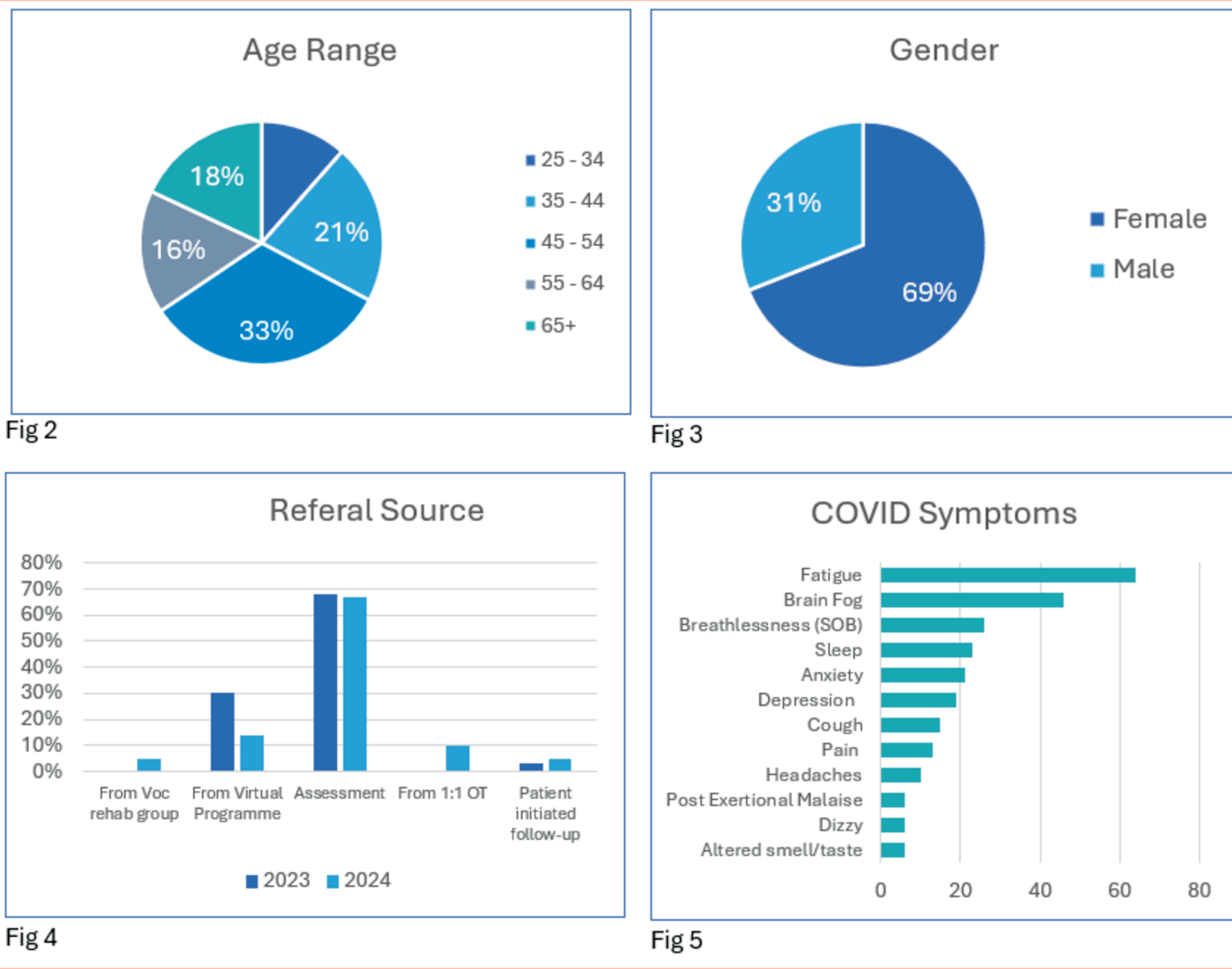
Demographic analysis from this evaluation suggests that prevalence of long covid is greater in women compared to men. PROM and feedback questionnaire demonstrates that the fatigue group is effective in supporting patients to better manage fatigue and participants benefited from the shared value of being with others with similar experience. There was a significant increase in numbers of discharges in 2023 compared to 2024. This could suggest over-reliance and dependence on therapy that could potentially hamper the grounding of self-management principles delivered in the programme.

Discussion and conclusion

Further work is required to understand factors that contribute towards long lasting benefits for patients who attend fatigue group. Develop a process to increase response rate in the use of PROMs. Eligibility criteria for the “three-month review group” is recommended.

Results

Baseline information collected include - gender, age range, referral source, attendance, Covid symptoms, PROM and discharge destination.



- 88% attended 4-5 sessions.
 - 96% completed at least one PROM.
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- 24 pre- and post-intervention MFIS showed improvement in all domains (fig 6).

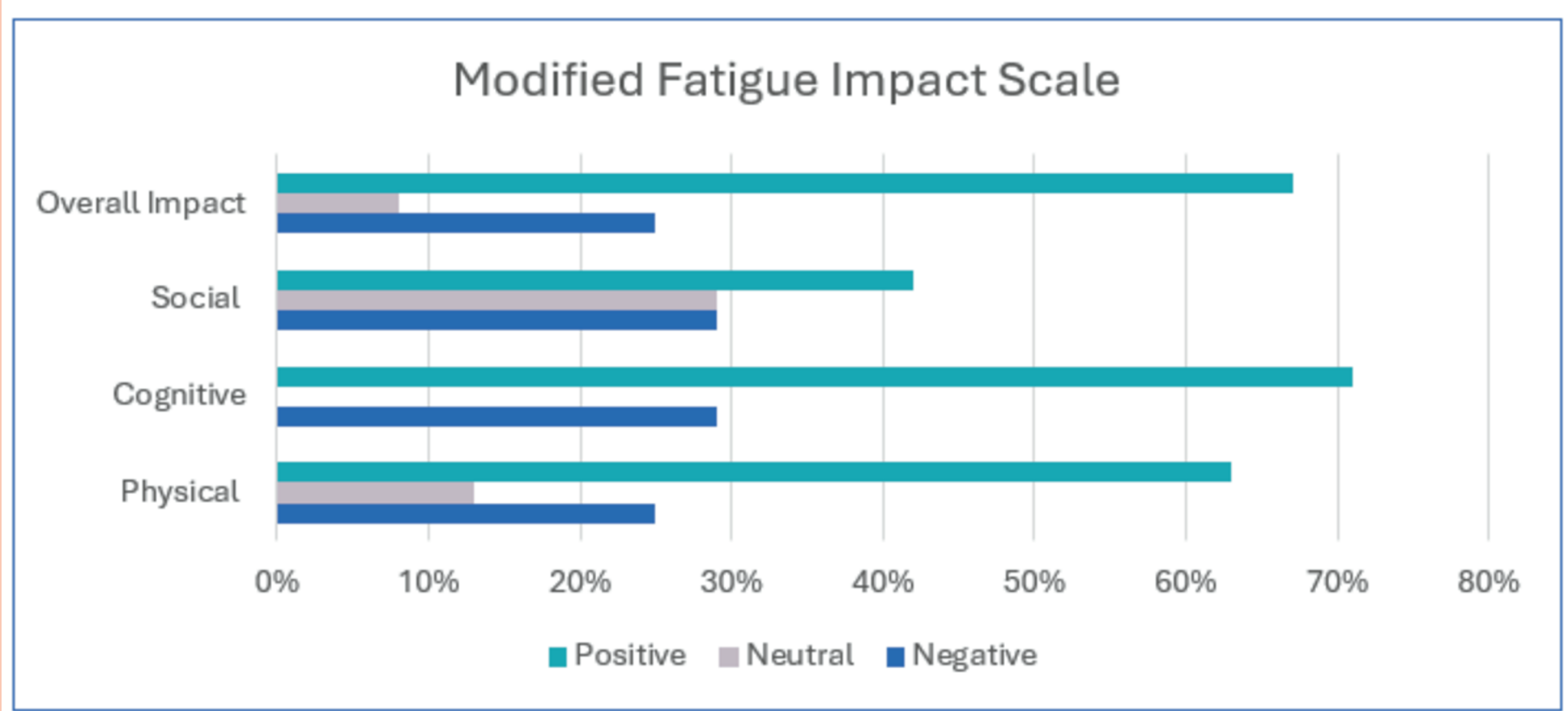


Fig 6

Completed paired WSAS demonstrates slight improvement in impairment of function (Fig 7).

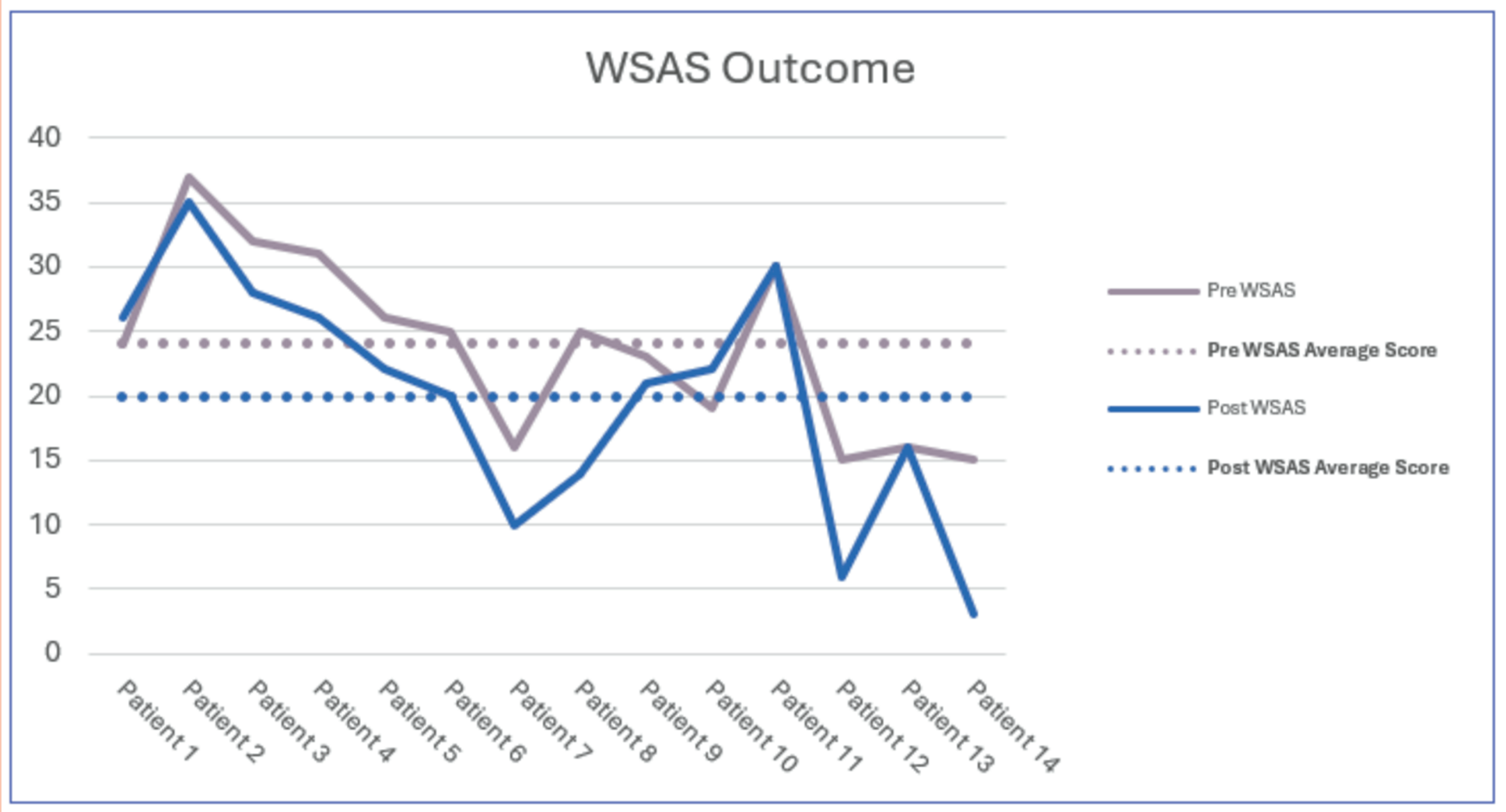


Fig 7

Patient experience from FMQ showed improvement in all areas (Fig 8).

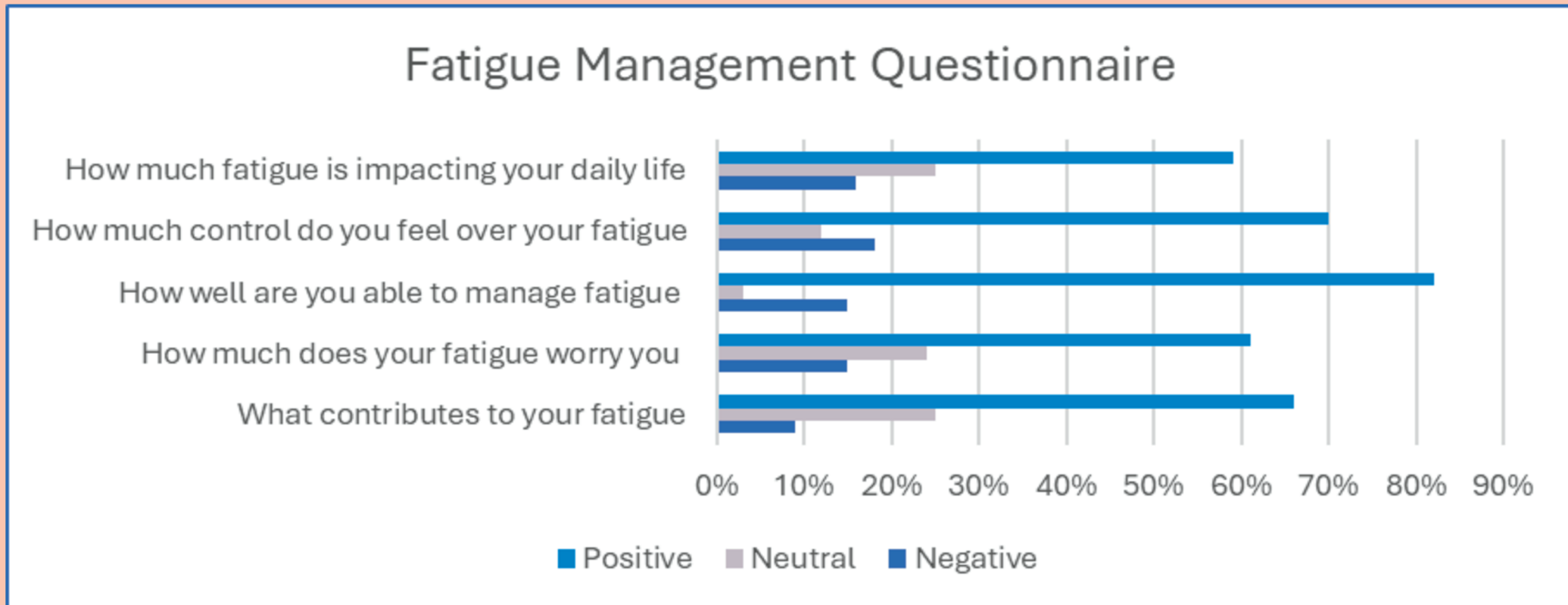


Fig 8

Patient experience from online call revealed “being with others” gave them the most value. (fig 9)



Fig 9

Participants’ comments:

- “Interaction with others confronting similar symptoms was helpful. Long Covid can be so isolating and certainly at times made me question my sanity. Hearing others talk coherently about struggling with the same issues was incredibly restorative and reassuring.”
- “I really enjoyed the group and the dynamics”
- “It was useful to meet others in a similar position. Guided peer support is really helpful. The OT that led the session was supportive and totally non-judgmental and led the group beautifully.”

Discharge destination	2023 %	2024 %
GP, no follow-up required	44%	23%
One-to-one OT intervention	31%	8%
3-month review group	6%	42%
Rehab programme	11%	8%
Respiratory physio	3%	8%
Management programme	3%	4%
Talking therapies	3%	4%

Table 2

References

- Prevalence of ongoing symptoms following coronavirus (COVID-19) infection in the UK - Office for National Statistics
- Outpatient group therapy for post-COVID patients - a naturalistic feasibility study of a face-to-face and online group concept - PMC <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11687220/>