

# Expanded roles for pharmacy technicians: Victorian metropolitan teaching hospital survey reveals some waves of support

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## Background

There has been much discussion about the need for the pharmacy workforce to evolve in order to support the changing Australian healthcare system. In 2016, SHPA released the 'Pharmacy Technician and Assistant Role Redesign within Australian Hospitals Project' report.

Subsequently, six Victorian metropolitan health services formed a collaboration to improve and standardise education, training, service provision and evaluation of pharmacy technician roles.

## Aim

To assess attitudes of pharmacy staff in a Victorian metropolitan teaching hospital towards expanded roles for hospital pharmacy technicians

## Method

An electronic questionnaire was circulated to all pharmacists, interns and pharmacy technicians and remained open for four weeks.

The 28 multiple-choice and 11 open-response questions focussed on three key domains: final accuracy checking technicians, drugs of addiction (DA) management and clinical support roles.

The questionnaire asked staff to explain why they may have disagreed/strongly disagreed with potential technician roles. Open-ended questions explored other potential tasks for technicians, perceived required skills and personal attributes, education, training and barriers to role expansion.

## Results

Overall, 61 (55%) pharmacy staff completed the questionnaire (42 pharmacists, 4 intern pharmacists and 15 technicians). Ward-based pharmacists comprised 46% of respondents.

Fewer than 10% of respondents believed hospital pharmacy technicians are currently adequately utilised.

Pharmacy staff attitudes towards advanced technician roles in final accuracy checking, DA management and clinical support are outlined in figures 1-8.

In the survey, key barriers to expansion of roles were legal and indemnity issues, trust, quality of training and credentialing and remuneration.

## Conclusion

Overall, it is accepted that pharmacy technician roles need to evolve. These survey findings, including perceived barriers to change, are informing the expansion of pharmacy technician roles within the pharmacy department.

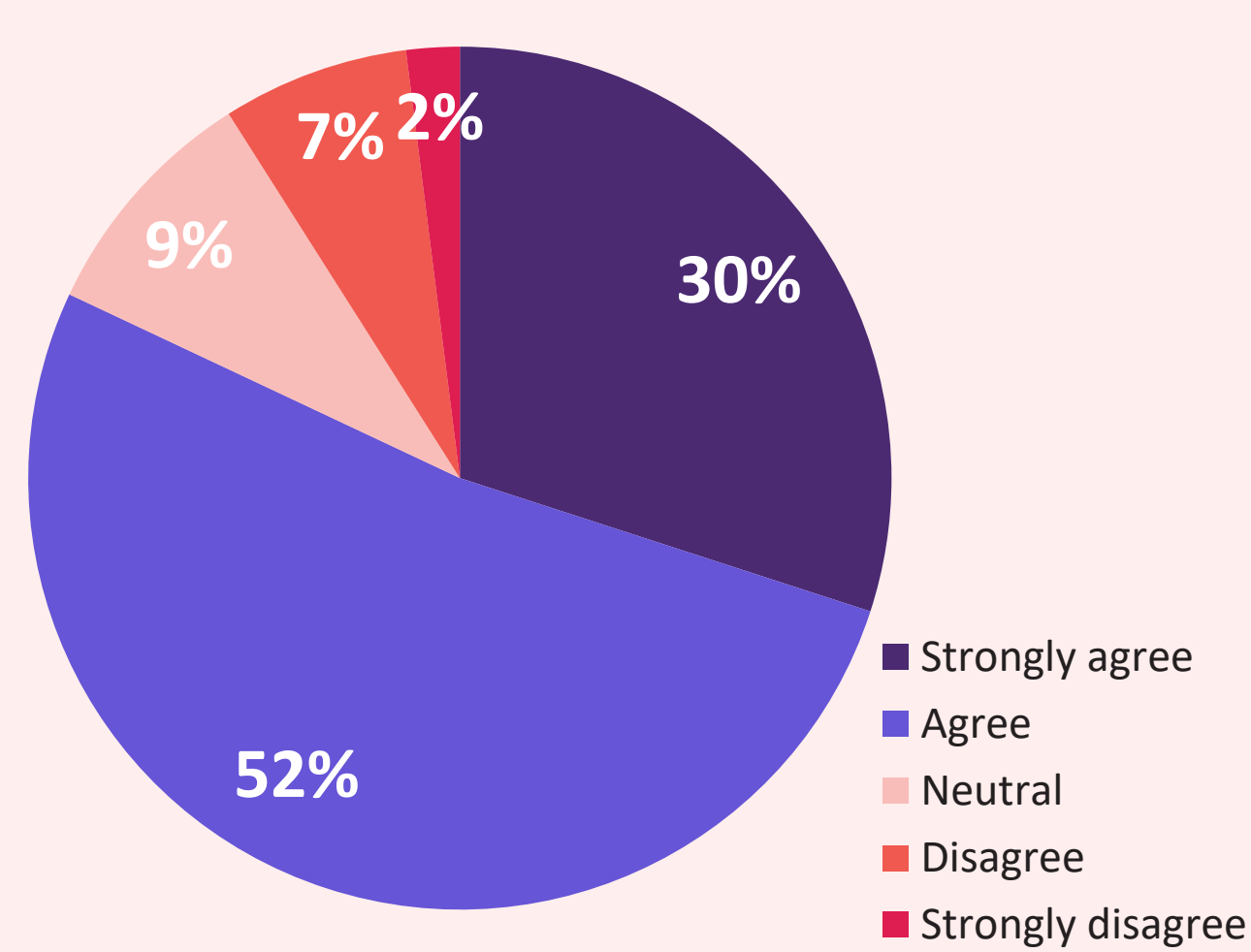
This data may provide useful insights for other pharmacy departments undertaking similar role redesign work.

## Results

### Final accuracy checking technicians - Supported

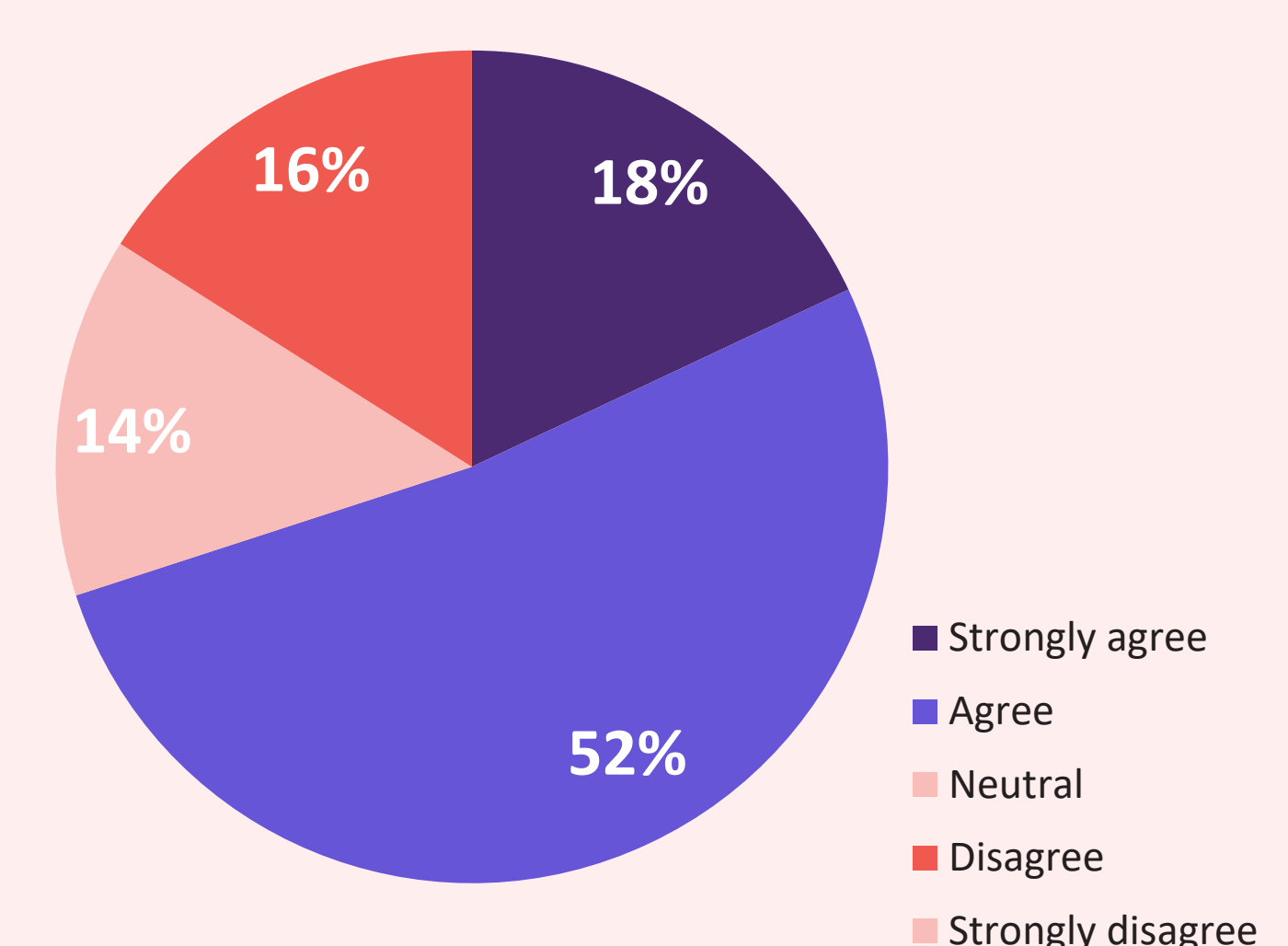
Final accuracy checking technician roles received **high levels of support** for inpatient medication supplies and non-cytotoxic extemporaneously prepared products.

Fig 1: Support for a Tech-check-tech role for inpatient supplies



"I think with the appropriate training our techs are extremely competent and will perform these tasks to an excellent standard"

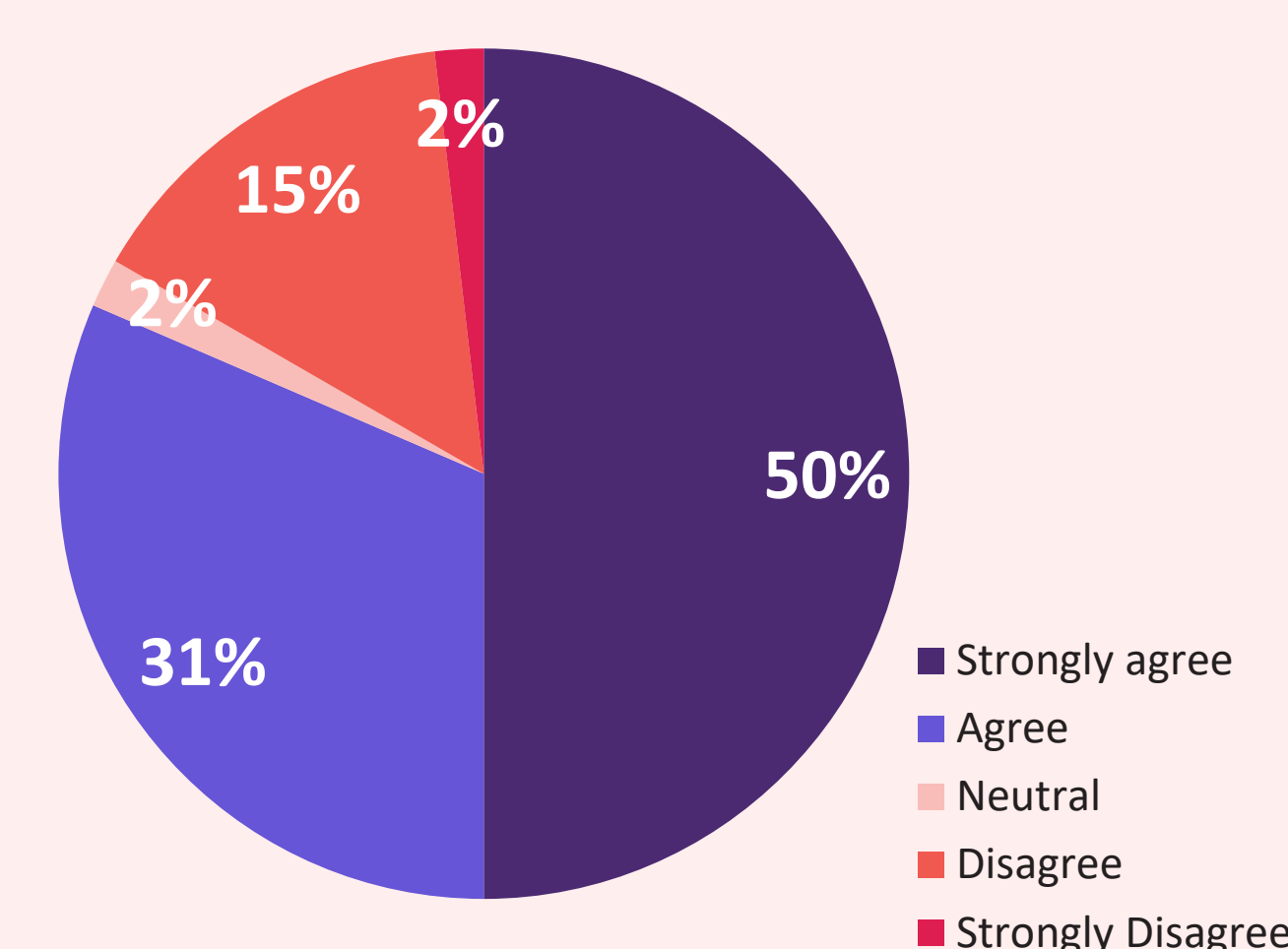
Fig 2: Support for a Tech-check-tech model for non-cytotoxic sterile products



### DA stock management - Supported

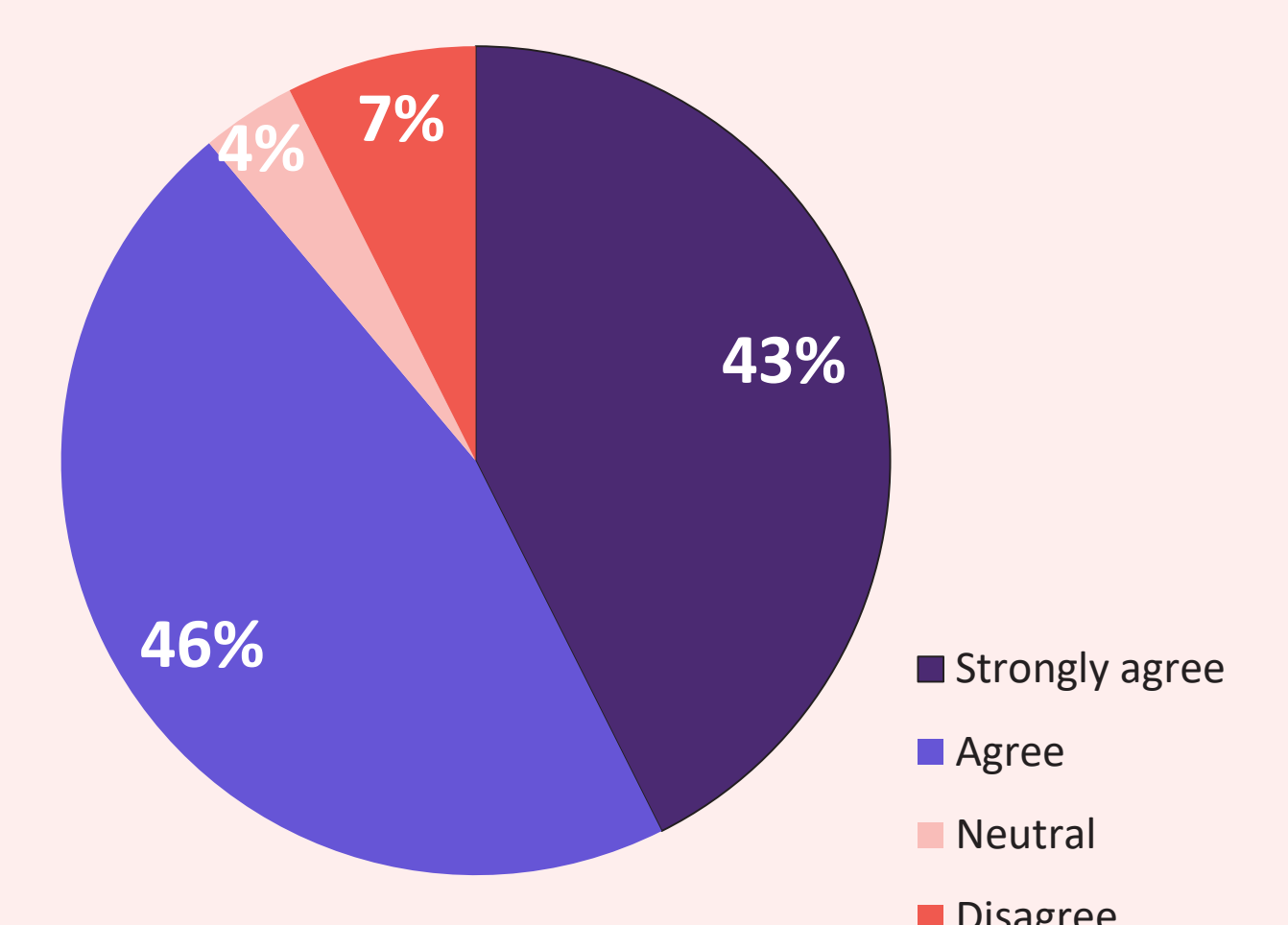
Pharmacy technician involvement in managing DA stock received **high levels of support**

Fig 3: Pharmacy technicians could make entries into the pharmacy DA register when dispensing



"Involvement of techs in managing DAs and delivering DAs to the wards is a 'no-brainer', and long overdue!"

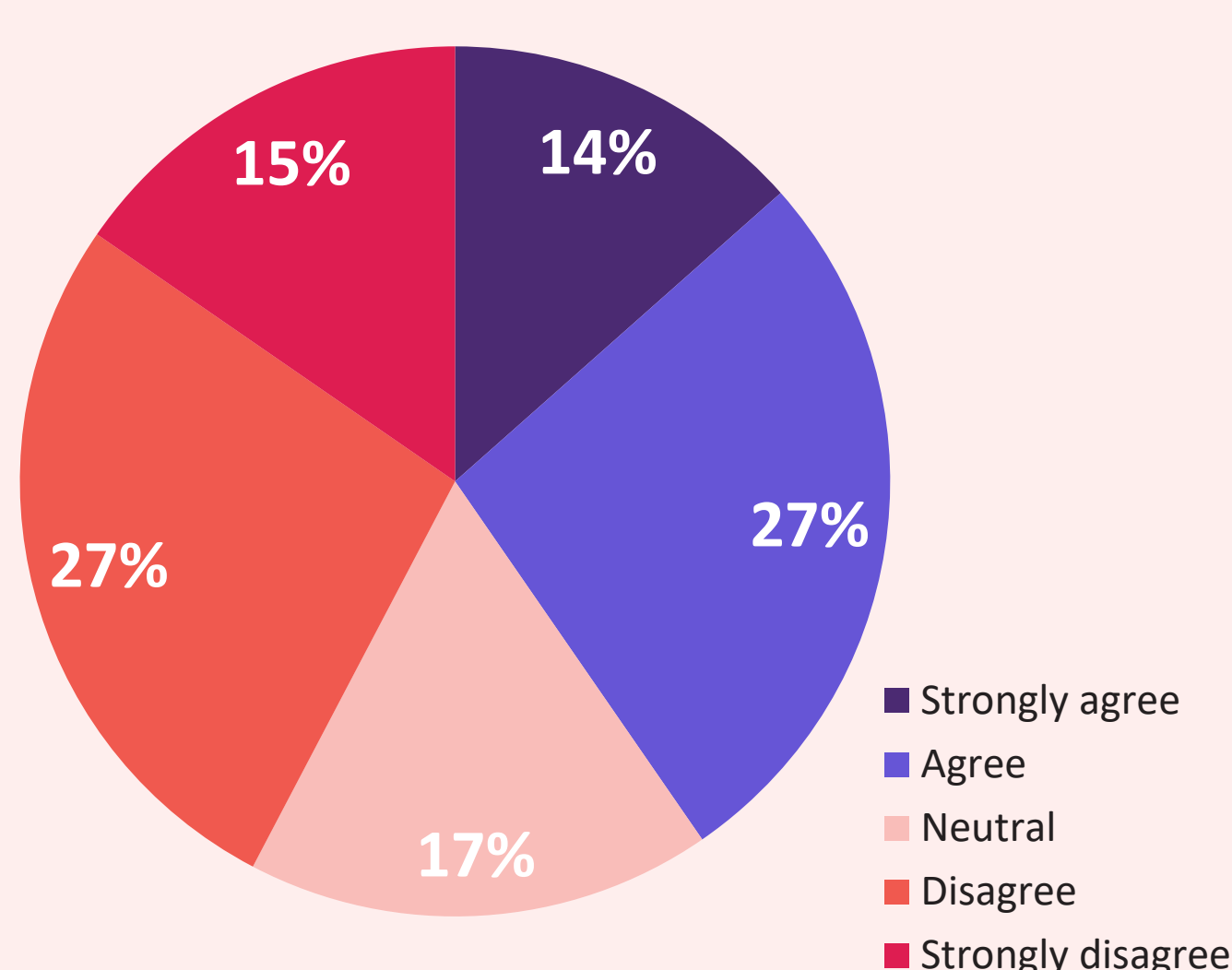
Fig 4: Pharmacy technicians could make entries into the ward DA register with a nurse



### Clinical support roles - Mixed levels of support

Pharmacy technician involvement in non-patient facing clinical support roles received **high levels of support** whereas patient-facing roles received **mixed levels of support**

Fig 5: Pharmacy technicians could counsel patients about medications



#### Discharge counselling

"In certain areas... patients are counselled by staff who are not trained [to do this]... for selected patients, appropriately credentialed pharmacy technicians would be an improvement... if there were...systems for referral back to a pharmacist"

Fig 6: Pharmacy technicians could document a Best Possible Medication History (BPMH)

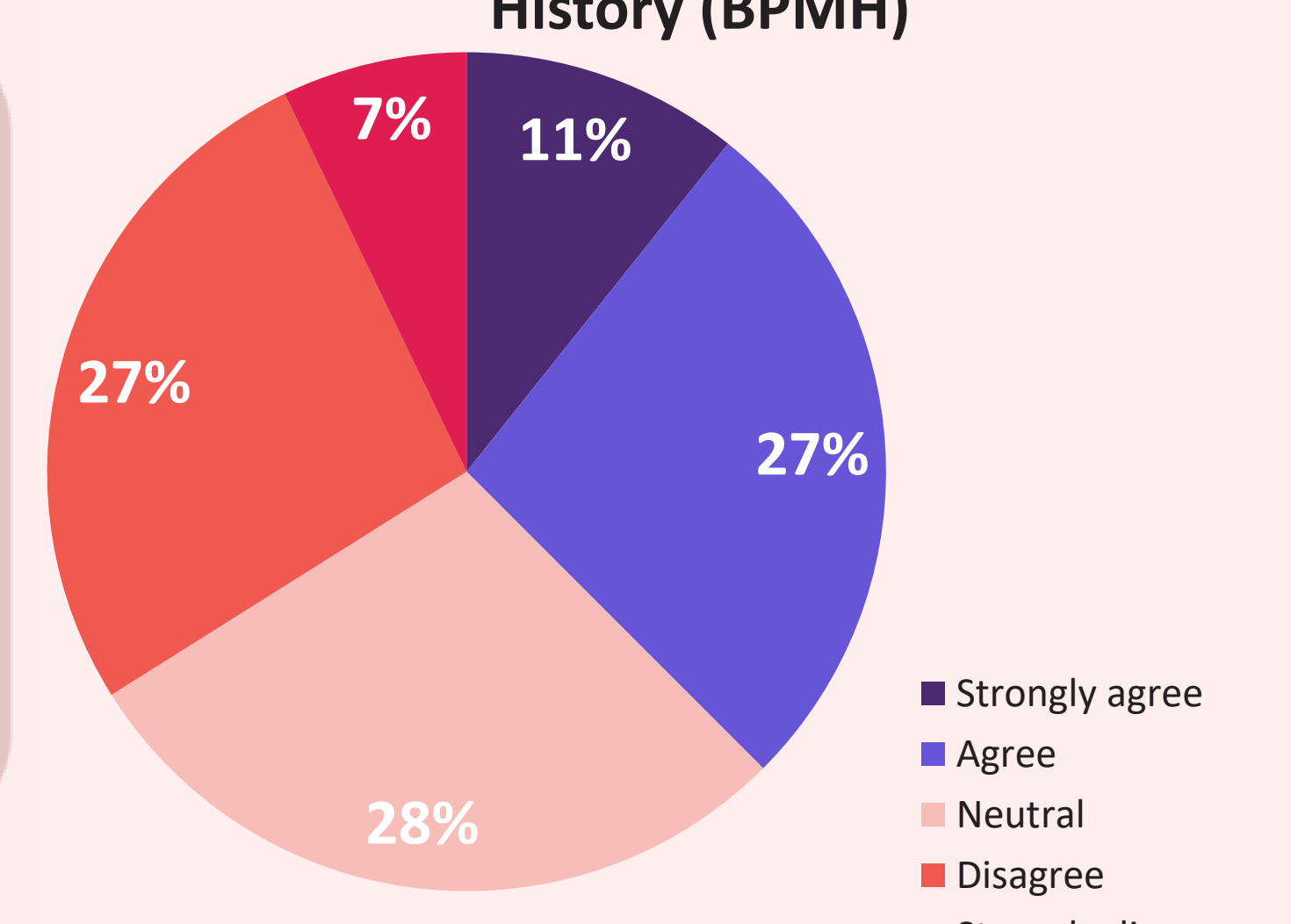
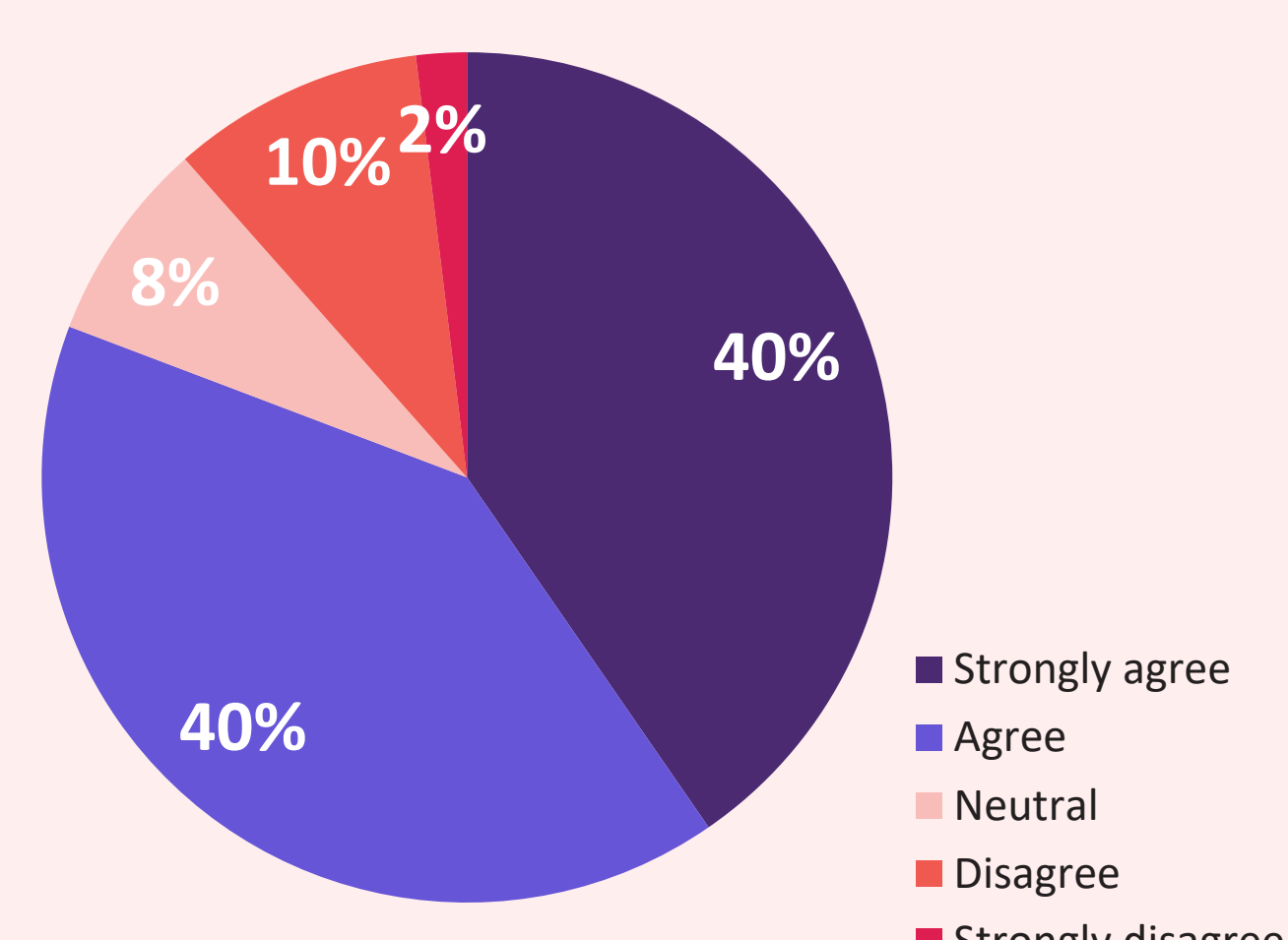


Fig 7: Pharmacy technicians could document a BPMH for patients from a residential aged care facility



#### Medication histories

"I feel comfortable with this in ED as these technicians would likely do a more comprehensive job than nursing and medical staff, due to superior product knowledge and time to focus on this task"

Fig 8: Pharmacy technicians could communicate with external health care professionals

