

How confident are primary care clinicians in diagnosis and management of respiratory conditions?

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Background/Aim

In the UK, diagnosis and management of common respiratory conditions is mainly delivered by primary care, but diagnostic testing, including spirometry and fractional exhaled nitric oxide (FeNO) is not widely available.

NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire & Berkshire West (BOB) Integrated Care Board (ICB) aimed to assess the confidence levels of primary care clinicians in diagnosing and managing respiratory conditions, to inform service development.

Method

- An anonymised survey was distributed to all GP Practices within BOB ICB, during February 2024.
- Clinicians rated their confidence levels across various domains.
- Data were analysed descriptively as continuous means and binary classification by score as Confident (4 or 5) or Not Confident (≤ 3).

Results

82

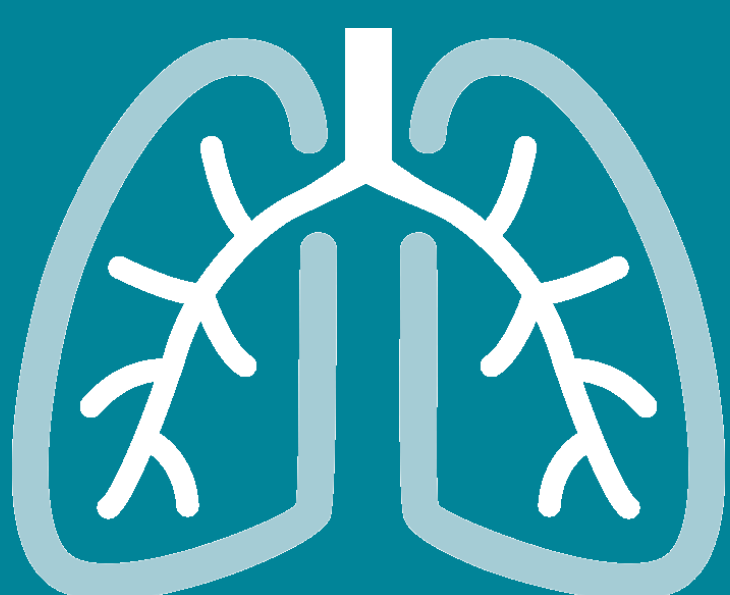
complete responses were received (25 GPs, 48 Nurses and 9 allied health professionals).



Confidence was highest in airways disease but binary rates of being 'Confident' were still relatively low (44-65%).

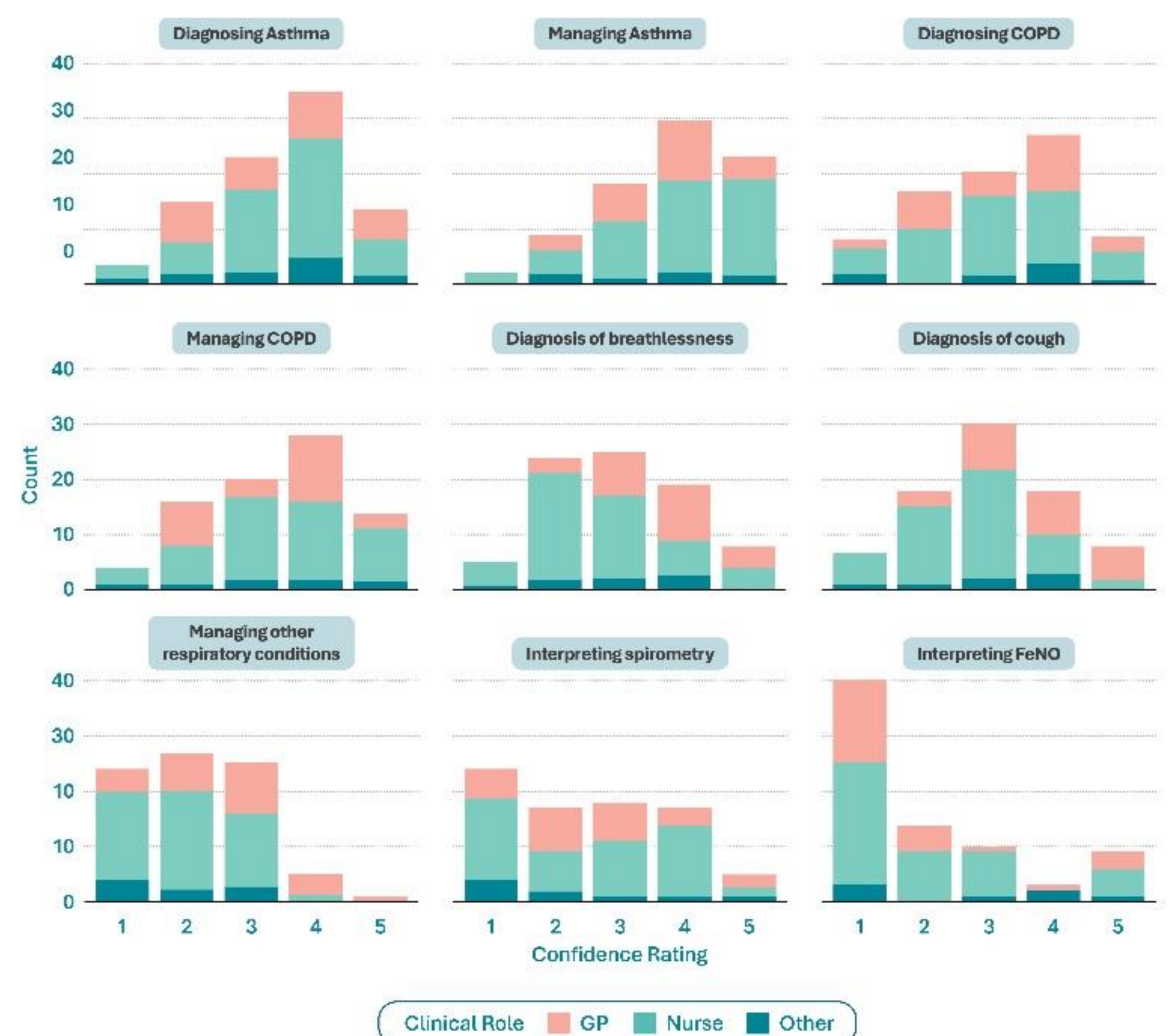
27% & 15%

Only 27% were Confident interpreting spirometry and 15% interpreting FeNO; even though 40% respondents had in-house spirometry provision.



33% and 32% were Confident in diagnosis of breathlessness and cough respectively.

Confidence ratings of primary care clinicians across domains of community respiratory practice



Primary care clinicians rated their levels of confidence across different domains of respiratory practice. 1, Not confident at all; 2, Slightly confident; 3, Somewhat confident; 4, Quite confident; 5, Very confident. Counts are divided by clinician background: GP (n=25), Nurse (n=48) and Other (n=9, made up of pharmacists (n=6), and paramedic/physician associate/Allied Health Professional (all n=1).

Conclusions

- Low levels of confidence in diagnosing and managing respiratory conditions in primary care.
- Confidence in diagnostic test interpretation particularly low.
- Any increase in primary care diagnostic testing to be accompanied by education or respiratory specialist support.