



Anna's Angel: Empowering Nurses in Providing Community Conversations about Taking Control and Planning for Difficult End of Life Decisions



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Introduction

End of Life Care (EOL) decisions are difficult to make. They occur at the most trying times of a person's life when decisions are needed right away. Nurses who work at the bedside usually find this a challenge when caring for patients without any form of end of life directives. Research has shown that providing patient education increases confidence in EOL care decisions and greatly influences discussion of care goals with family, and physicians for community dwelling older adults.

At Atlantic Health Systems (AHS), direct-care nurses are often faced with challenges when no Advanced Directives (AD) is available. During several community outreach events, AD and EOL care decision making was a topic of interest. In response to both needs, the AHS Palliative Care team created a video named Anna's Story. AHS nurses and health care professionals willing to volunteer their time are trained to go into the community and educate people. These specially educated nurses are called Anna's Angels.

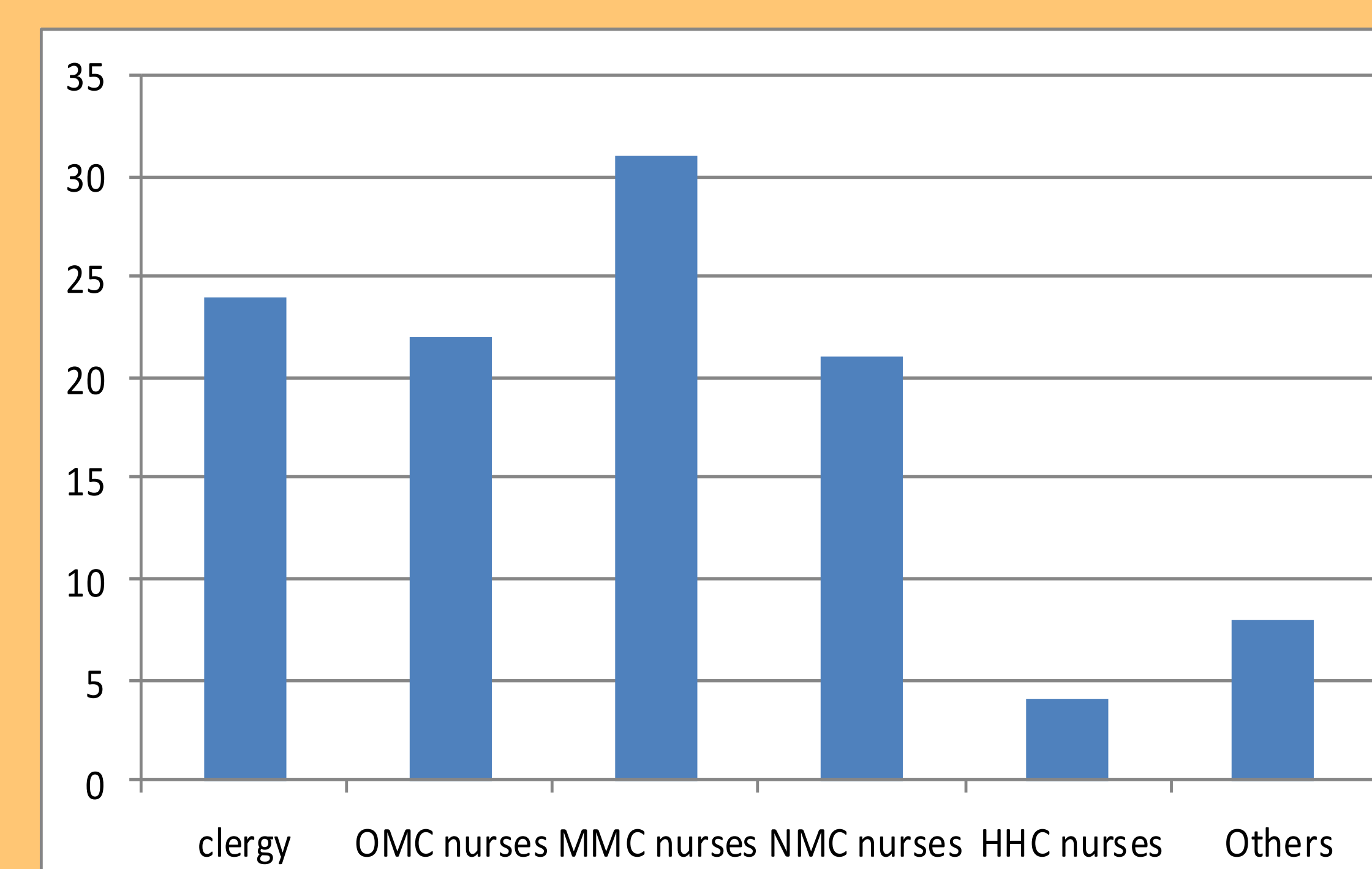
Method

Anna's Angels utilize a 20 minute video of Anna (patient) and her granddaughter as they go through the unexpected hospital stay that ended up badly. Anna narrates her story and how she did not want to end up suffering, intubated in critical care. It also goes through each staff member that took care of her and how they felt Anna wanted to live her last moments of life and what her grand daughter who is the only living relative felt what she needed to do in hopes that Anna will rally back to her former level of functioning.

In coordination with community outreach program, requests from community are scheduled in different sites: churches, library and health centers. Anna's Angels voluntarily schedule themselves in pairs to do the teaching. The video is shown to participants and serves as a trigger for initiating a community conversation about taking control and planning for difficult health care decisions. Anna's Angels' role include assisting in identifying education needs, coaching on how to start that discussion with loved ones and their physician on the topic of EOL care, assisting in completing an AD and referring them different resources for further support and follow-up.

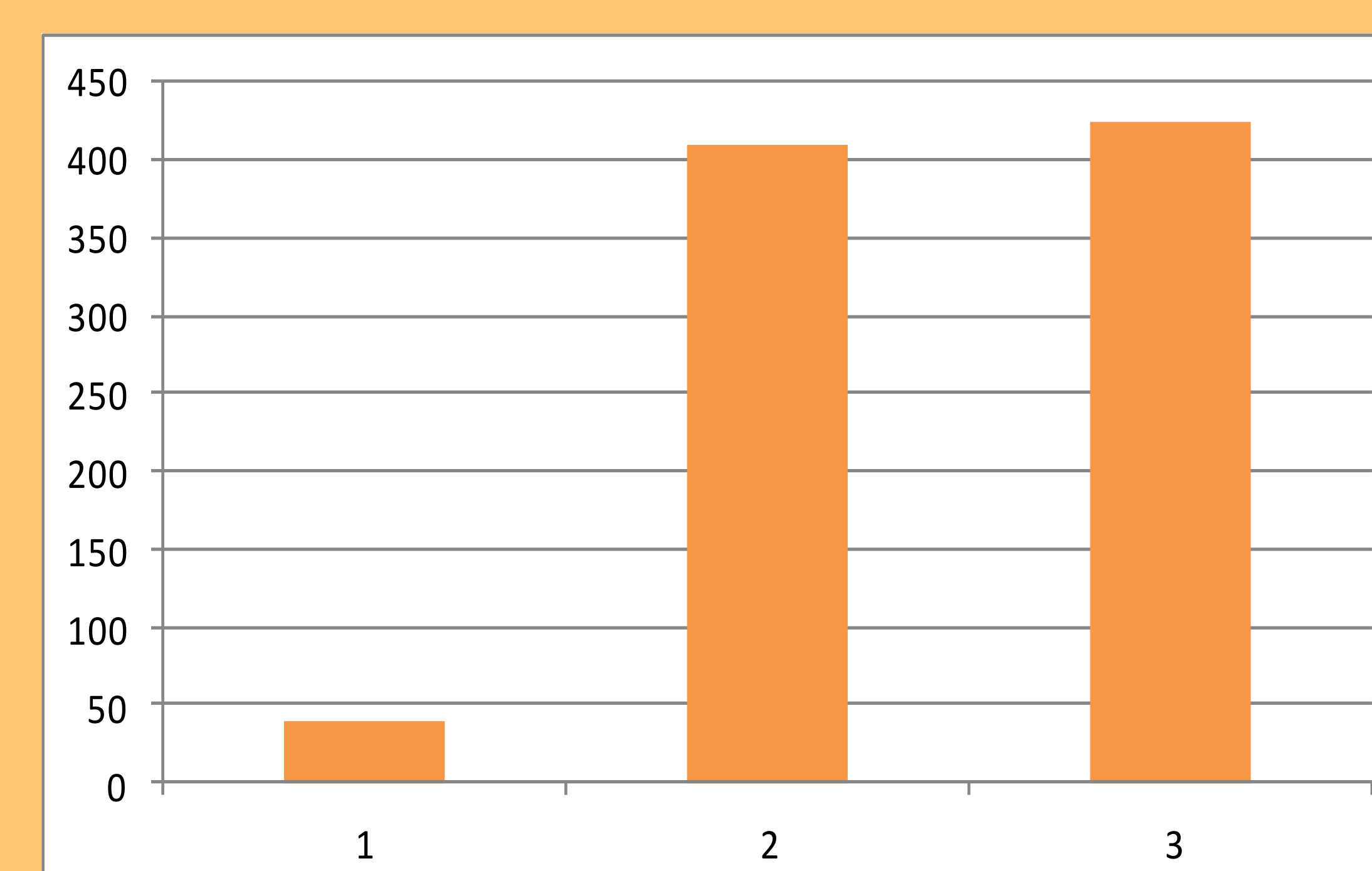
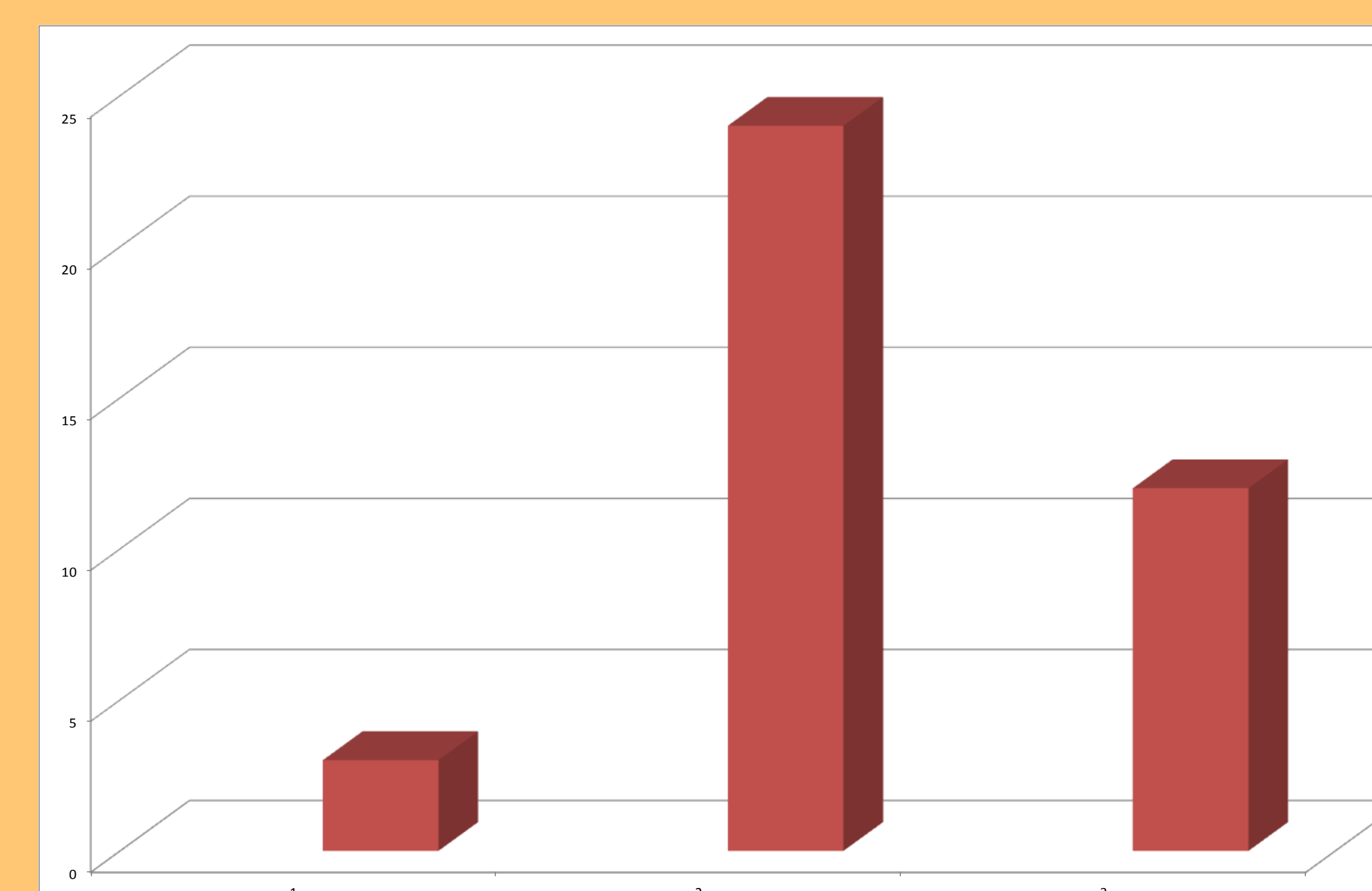
Pre and post survey evaluations were created to measure success and obtain feedback for improvement. Anna's Angels empowered nurses to become experts of AD. Nurses utilize their involvement as part of a career ladder program.

Data



Anna's angels recruited included nurses from various AHS hospitals: Morristown Medical Center, (MMC), Overlook Medical Center (OMC) and Newton Medical Center (NMC). Some Atlantic Hospice Home Care (HHC) Nurses, clergy and students in both pastoral care and nursing were also trained.

There were a number of presentations completed by Anna's Angels from year 1 (2011), year 2 (2012) and year 3 (2013). Currently we have 12 requests of presentations and have scheduled 1 for 2014, all others are pending scheduling at local churches, library and town centers.



A total of 874 + participants attended the presentations by our Anna's Angels. Year 1 (2011) we had only 40. Year 2 (2012), we had around 410 participants and about 424 in year 3 (2013).

References are available upon request and are listed separately.

Results and Discussion

The federal health policy called Patient Self-Determination Act (PSDA) passed in 1990 aimed at increasing filling and signing of AD's. Despite this law, EOL decision making remains to be a big social concern all over the country. Review of literature showed innovative solutions in response to the dilemma of AD completion for community dwelling older adults. A systematic review and multi-level analysis completed by Bravo, et al (2008), summarized the effectiveness of interventions to promote AD among Older adults and found that oral discussion about AD over a series of sessions is the most successful intervention of all. Medvene, et al (2003) looked at promotion of AD in Faith communities. Parish nurses were instrumental at providing educational program. This study concluded that this approach is very effective at increasing dialogue, alteration, and/or signing of AD. When news about the Terri Shiavo case reached the media, focus on AD was re-energized. In 2005, Critical Care unit (CCU) nurses in an Idaho hospital became interested in organizing a means to provide focus on AD. They opened an AD booth at a community health fare where members were free to talk about and obtain information on AD. Visitors were each provided with a wallet card that contains location and summary of their EOL wishes. After a year, they followed it up with a one hour seminar on AD, combined with a pre/post seminar survey to measure perception, knowledge and determine barriers to completing an AD (Later & King, 2007). A randomized trial on effect of EOL planning interventions on the completion of AD in homeless persons was completed in 2008 (Song, et al). The study showed that both straightforward and elaborate ways of engaging homeless persons achieved significant results of engagement in AD completion. It also showed that individual attention improved the success rate. In Japan, Matsui (2010) looked at the efficiency of EOL education among elderly living in the community and found that a more accepting attitude and independence were shown by attendees. McBride (2010) wrote about a work experience that showed that video can eliminate obstacles in communication and assists the older adult strengthen their decision about EOL care. Robinson, et al (2008) in her article enumerated some of the roadblocks to finishing one's AD. In 2009,

Anna's Angel is a great example of empowering nurses in providing community conversations about taking control and planning for difficult end of life decisions. It also shows collaboration between community, nursing, Palliative care team and administration in utilizing video, educational handouts, open discussion, provision of AD assistance and follow-up.

Anna's Angels was created by the AHS Palliative Care team prior to the development of Anna's Angels. Video making was supported by a grant from Johnson & Johnson®. The recruitment of volunteer Angels came after when the need to extend to the community was identified. Acknowledgement is given to team that wrote, revised and filmed the video.