

The Cédric Hèle Institute implements **communication training** for physicians, nurses and paramedical staff in oncology, funded by the Belgian National Government.

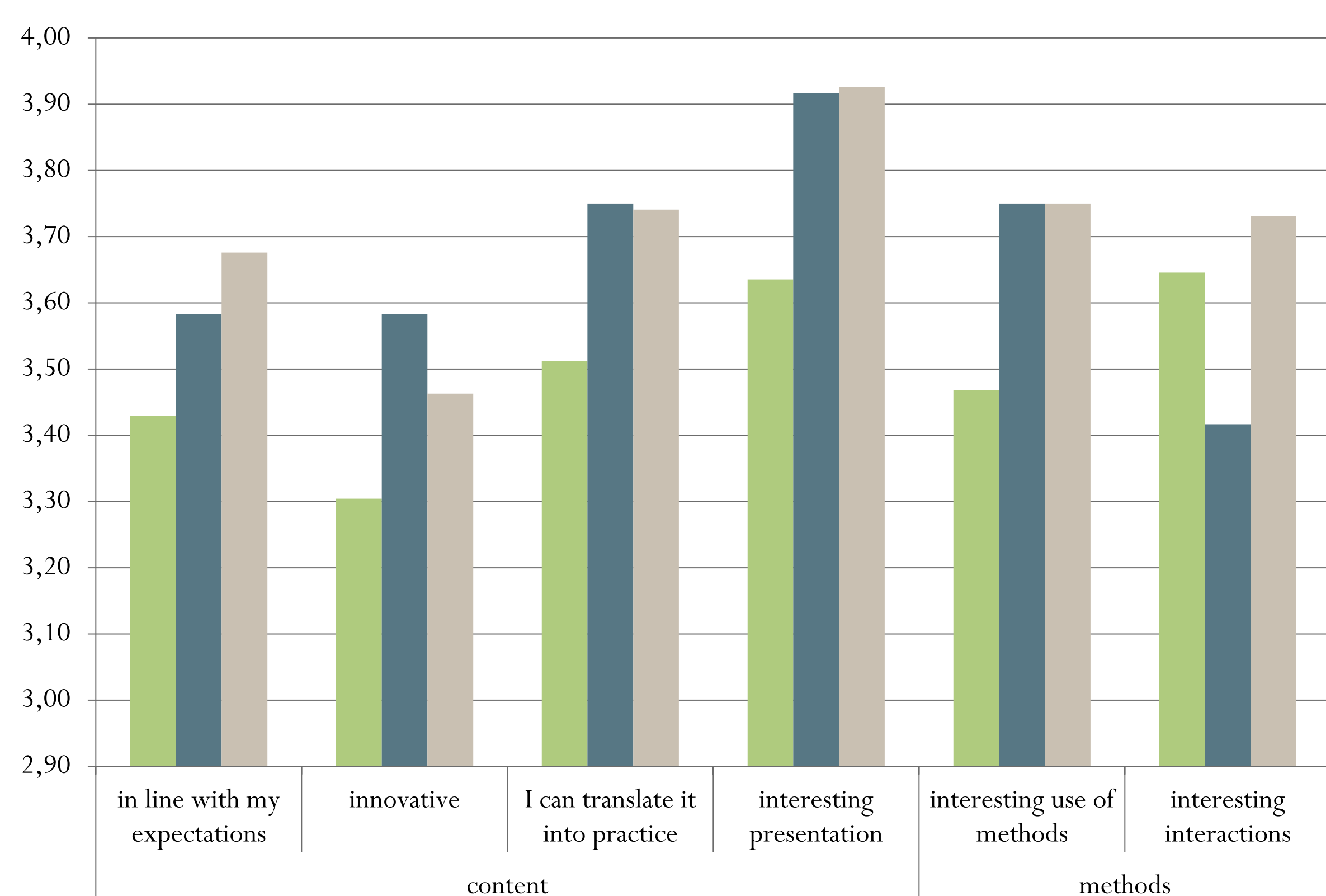
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Method

CHi developed a 30h training program for nurses, paramedics and doctors. The program offers a variety of theoretical models, and integrates many interactive methods such as (self-) reflection, exercises, homework assignments and role-plays. These methods create good conditions to teach communication skills, to practice skills and to integrate these into clinical practice. The focus of the training is on the patient and his family (coping, illness perceptions, communication with family members, conflict handling), the teams within which we operate (team support) and our own functioning (self-care).

Results



- 1= not at all
 2= insufficient
 3= sufficient
 4= fully agreed
- training for doctors
 ■ basic training program
 ■ continuing training program

250 Oncology professionals presented their candidacy. CHi selected 162 professionals: 70 Doctors, 76 (specialist-)nurses, 12 social workers en 4 other paramedics. Each course was given by two trainers, this to allow maximum interaction. Evaluations were very positive. Professionals feel more competent at work after attending the course. They are more aware of their communication, and reflect more. This makes them feel more confident in difficult situations. The trainees also highly appreciated the interactions with colleagues from other disciplines and hospitals. In answer, The Belgian Government decided to re-invest in training for 150 professionals in 2011.

Background

Good communication is required in cancer care. To provide qualitative cancer care many topics (such as diagnosis, treatment, recovery, relapse) need to be discussed with the patients. However, caregivers education focuses mainly on technical aspects of care. The Cédric Hèle Institute - Flemish institute for psychosocial oncology - coordinates training programs in psycho-oncology. In 2010 CHi was designated by the Belgian Government to develop a course in communication for 150 professionals working in cancer care programs.

Conclusions

The communication training contributes to the aim of the Chi to improve psychosocial care of cancer patients in Flanders. Studies show that effective communication of health care providers improves the welfare of their patients, but also their own wellbeing.

Research Implications

The communication program is evidence based: the theoretical framework is build on scientific research in communication in oncology. Clinical practice is implemented in the interactive modules. The trainers are all working within the oncology setting and draw material from their own working setting. Trainees bring in clinical cases, difficulties of the daily work, and results of home work assignments and are trained to implement the evidence into the daily practice.

Clinical Implications

Trainees improved their communication skills. The interactive methodology provides a good basis for transferring these skills into clinical practice. Not only this leads to a better care of cancer patients and their relatives. Research shows that training in communication reduces the risk of burnout. The contacts and exchange of experience between different onco-disciplines and different hospitals was also very valuable. The intra- and interdisciplinary networking creates a good platform for these professionals.



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