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BACKGROUND

“Demonstrate the values, attitudes and behaviours expected of a pharmacy professional at all times”¹

- Professional identity (PI) is considered a multifaceted interaction between an individual's perception of themselves and their career;² however there is a lack of an agreed definition for pharmacists.
- Students with a strong sense of PI can transition more readily into the workplace and tend to have greater self-confidence in fulfilling the requirements of their role, particularly more complex and uncertain aspects of practice.³
- There is a lack of research into pharmacy students' perceptions of who they are, what they are becoming and what they will be doing when qualified.⁴ Uncertainty exists amongst academics, professional development organizations and patient-facing pharmacists about what it will mean to be a future pharmacist.
- Students are peripheral members of more than one community of practice rather than a novice member of the pharmacy profession alone. This multi-membership has been reported to contribute to identity dissonance among trainee pharmacists.⁴
- While there is no consensus on the most effective method of supporting pharmacy students to develop their PI, research has identified several factors that are beneficial in PI formation, as presented in Figure 1.⁵

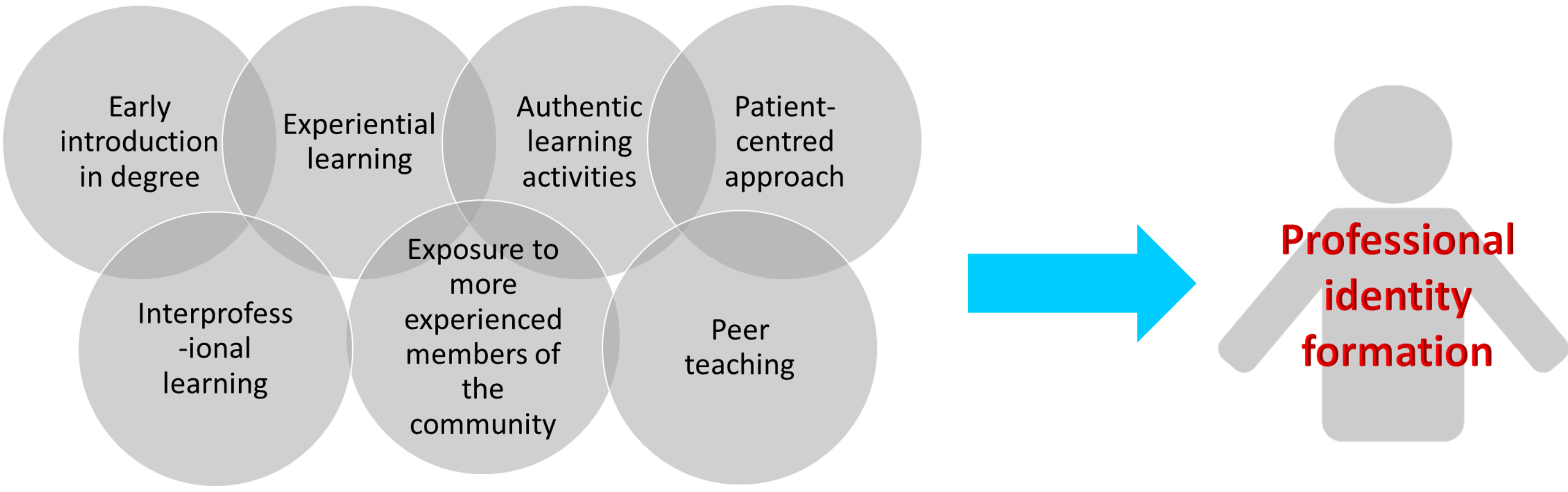


Figure 1. Educational factors that help undergraduate students form a PI.

- In order to investigate how development of PI is facilitated within the MPharm at Queen's University Belfast (QUB), students were asked what PI means to them and what elements of the degree programme help them to 'feel' like a pharmacist.⁶

STUDY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES



Aim To develop and evaluate a learning intervention, informed by relevant literature, to support pharmacy student PI formation by presenting an opportunity for them to feel and act like a pharmacist.

Objectives

- ✓ Explore opinions of Year 2 MPharm students at QUB of what PI means to them
- ✓ Determine the aspects of the MPharm degree programme that help them feel most and least like a pharmacist
- ✓ Evaluate the impact of a novel patient-centred workshop on PI formation

METHODS

An overview of the study is presented in Figure 2. Ethical approval was granted by Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Reference: MHLS 19_30).

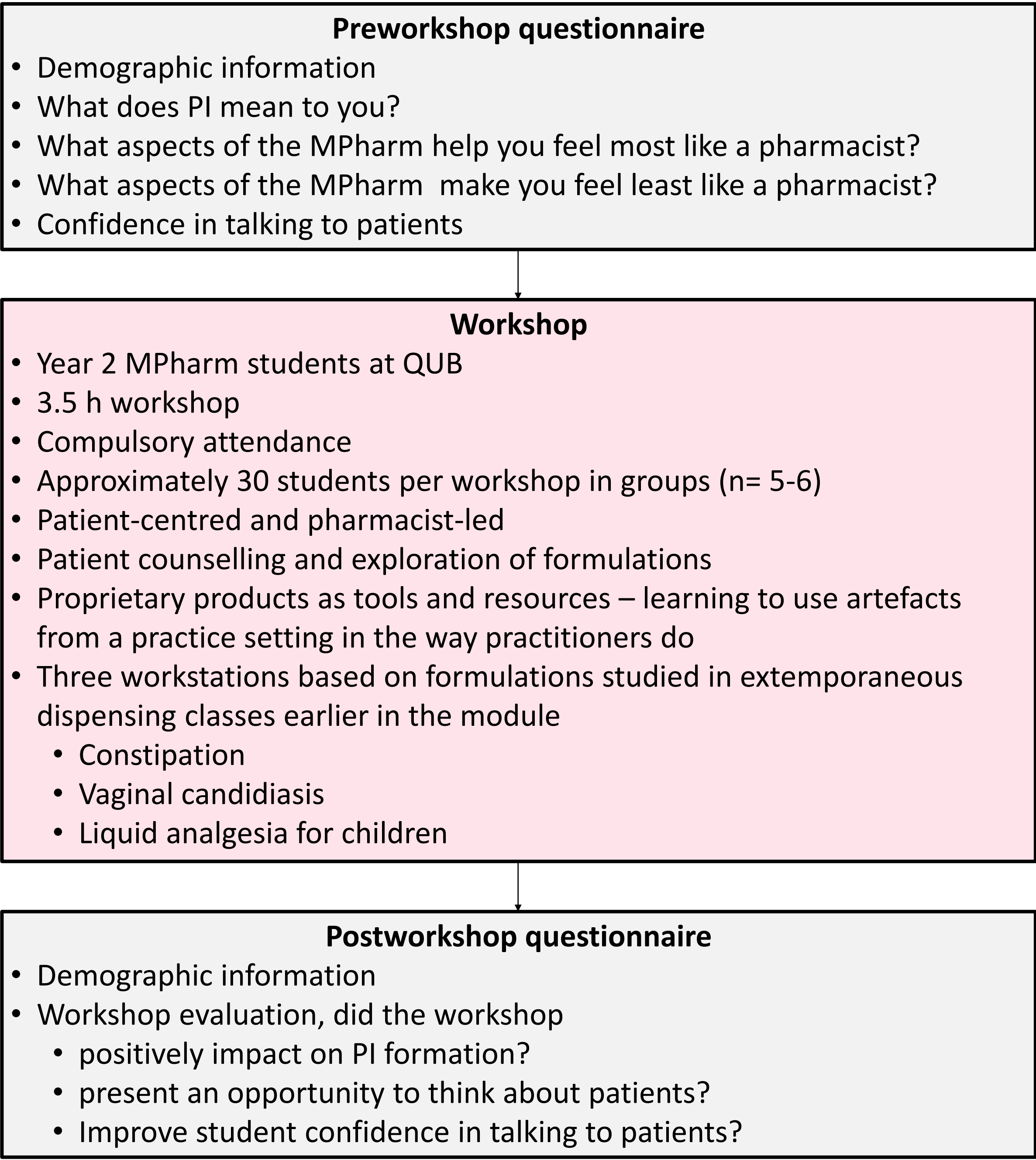


Figure 2. Overview of study

Questionnaires were informed by review of relevant literature and MPharm content in QUB.² Most questions were closed format using a 5-point Likert scale to measure level of agreement. Open-ended 'comments' spaces were included for additional information, where relevant. Data was analysed primarily by descriptive statistics and Chi-squared analysis. Responses from opened-ended questions were thematically analysed.

RESULTS

- Response rates to the pre-workshop and post-workshop questionnaires were 94.79% (91/96) and 92.71% (89/96), respectively.

Table 1. Themes and sampler quotations on students' response to 'What does professional identity mean to you?' (n = 69)

Theme title	Exemplar quotation
Attitude, behaviour & values	"It means having a broad and good knowledge about your career, having good attitude and behaviour while consulting customers/patients and being responsible for what you're doing." [S1]
Knowledge, skills & experience	"The ability of having good knowledge in the field you're working in and being able to communicate it well" [S65]
Interaction with & perception of others	"The role you provide to the patient as you work as part of a multidisciplinary team." [S35]
Person & role	"With respect to pharmacy - the idea that pharmacy is an important part of life/more than just career" [S34]
Unsure	"Not too sure" [S12]

Preworkshop questionnaire

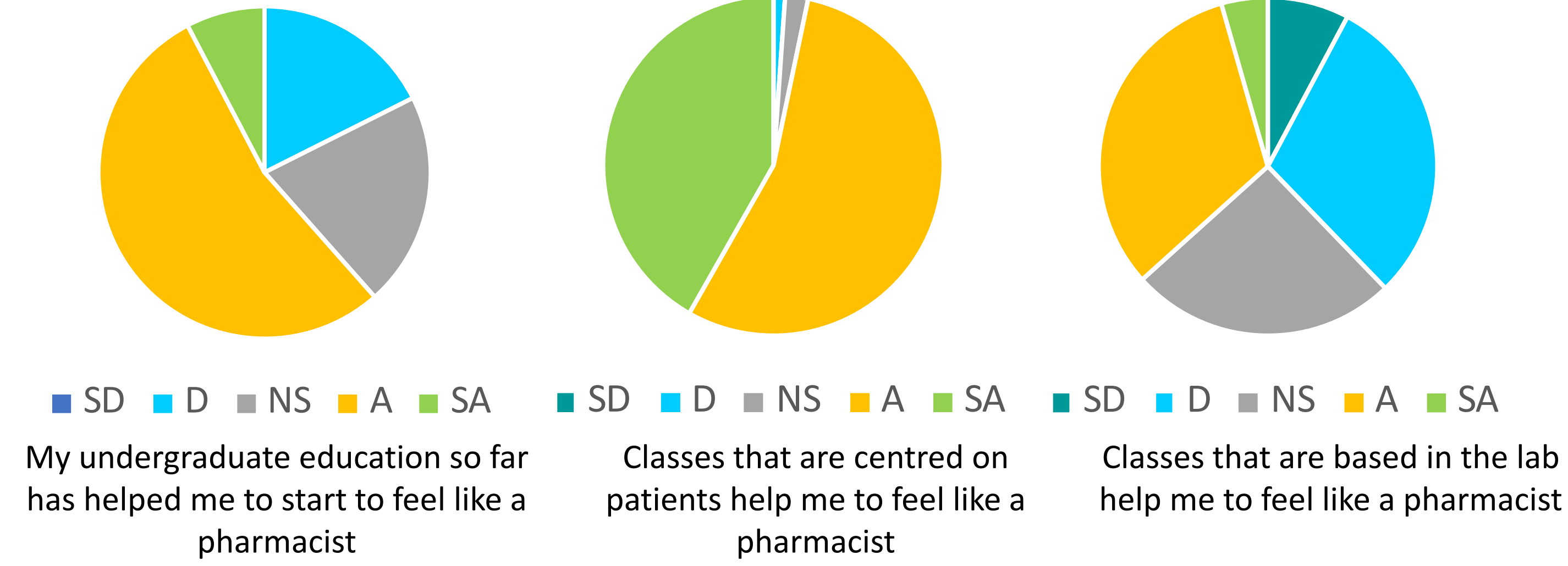


Figure 3. Response to preworkshop questionnaires statements where, SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, NS = not sure, A = agree and SA = strongly agree (n =91).

Postworkshop questionnaire

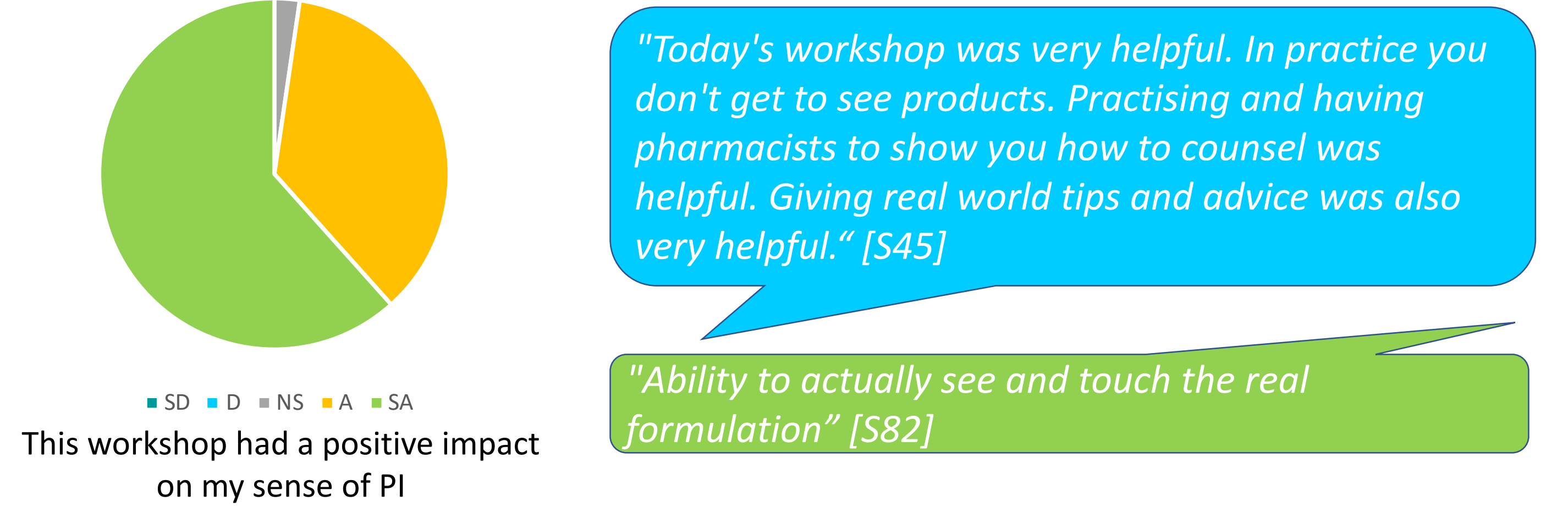


Figure 4. Response to postworkshop questionnaires statements where, SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, NS = not sure, A = agree and SA = strongly agree (n =86) and exemplar 'free text' comments about the workshop.

- Students reported increased confidence in speaking with patients about suppositories and pessaries following the workshop ($p < 0.05$).
- 93% (80/86) of students agreed or strongly agreed that the workshop added to what they had learnt in extemporaneous dispensing classes.

CONCLUSION

- Students understanding of PI coincides with literature findings, including uncertainty as to what it means to be a pharmacist in training.⁵
- Students expressed that this workshop, which provided a patient focus and opportunity to participate in authentic professional activity alongside peers and more experienced members of the pharmacy community, complemented previously undertaken science-based learning.
- Teaching and learning activities such as the presented workshop are one way of helping students form a PI when opportunities for workplace-based experiential learning are limited, particularly in earlier years of training.
- Future work includes a longitudinal study with the same study participants in year 4 of the MPharm and potential for multi-centre comparison – get in touch if interested!

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