

Cedars Sinai Medical Center – Pre-op/PACU/OSU
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Background Information

Accurate EKG rhythm identification is a critical competency for nurses in critical care settings. To ensure ongoing proficiency, EKG interpretation competency assessments are required annually. Traditionally, this competency has been evaluated through a test consisting of multiple-choice questions addressing cardiac rhythm interpretation and appropriate clinical response. Many nurses have reported experiencing increased anxiety related to this testing format, which may impact competency performance and overall learning engagement.

Objectives

To reduce anxiety associated with EKG identification assessments by developing an alternative competency method that is both engaging and relevant to perianesthesia nursing practice.

Process of Implementation

Leveraging gamification as an educational strategy, a hands-on EKG puzzle was developed to assess rhythm identification competency. The puzzle included three components: EKG rhythm strips, corresponding rhythm names, and appropriate treatments (Fig. 1). In alignment with ASPAN's minimal staffing requirements for Phase I recovery, nurses worked in pairs to complete the activity. To demonstrate competency, participants were required to accurately match each rhythm strip with its correct name and associated interventions (Fig. 2). A score of 80% or higher was considered a passing benchmark. Upon completion, registered nurses were invited to complete a survey to evaluate satisfaction with the assessment method.

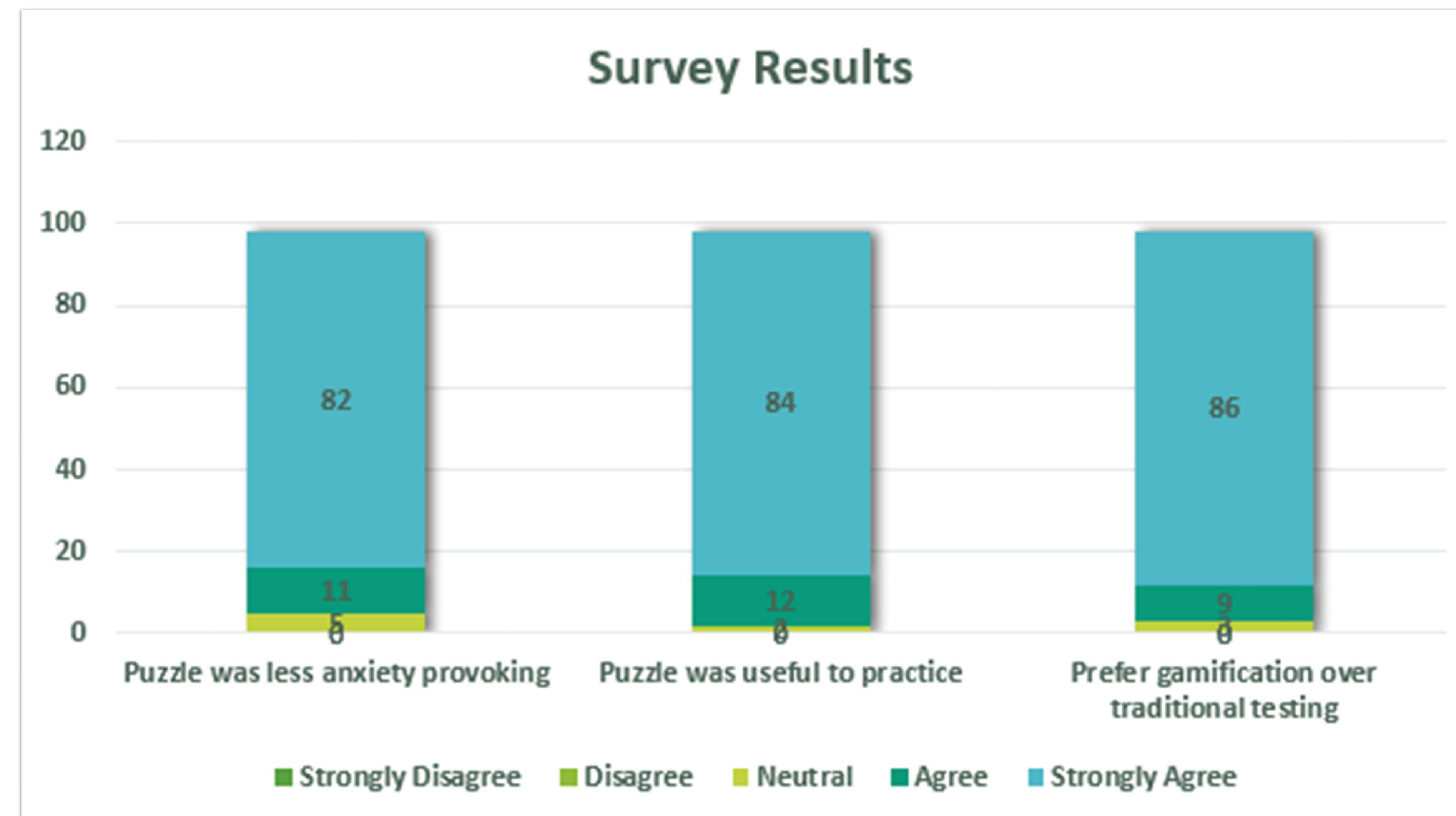


Table 1: Likert Scale Results Rating Competency Experience

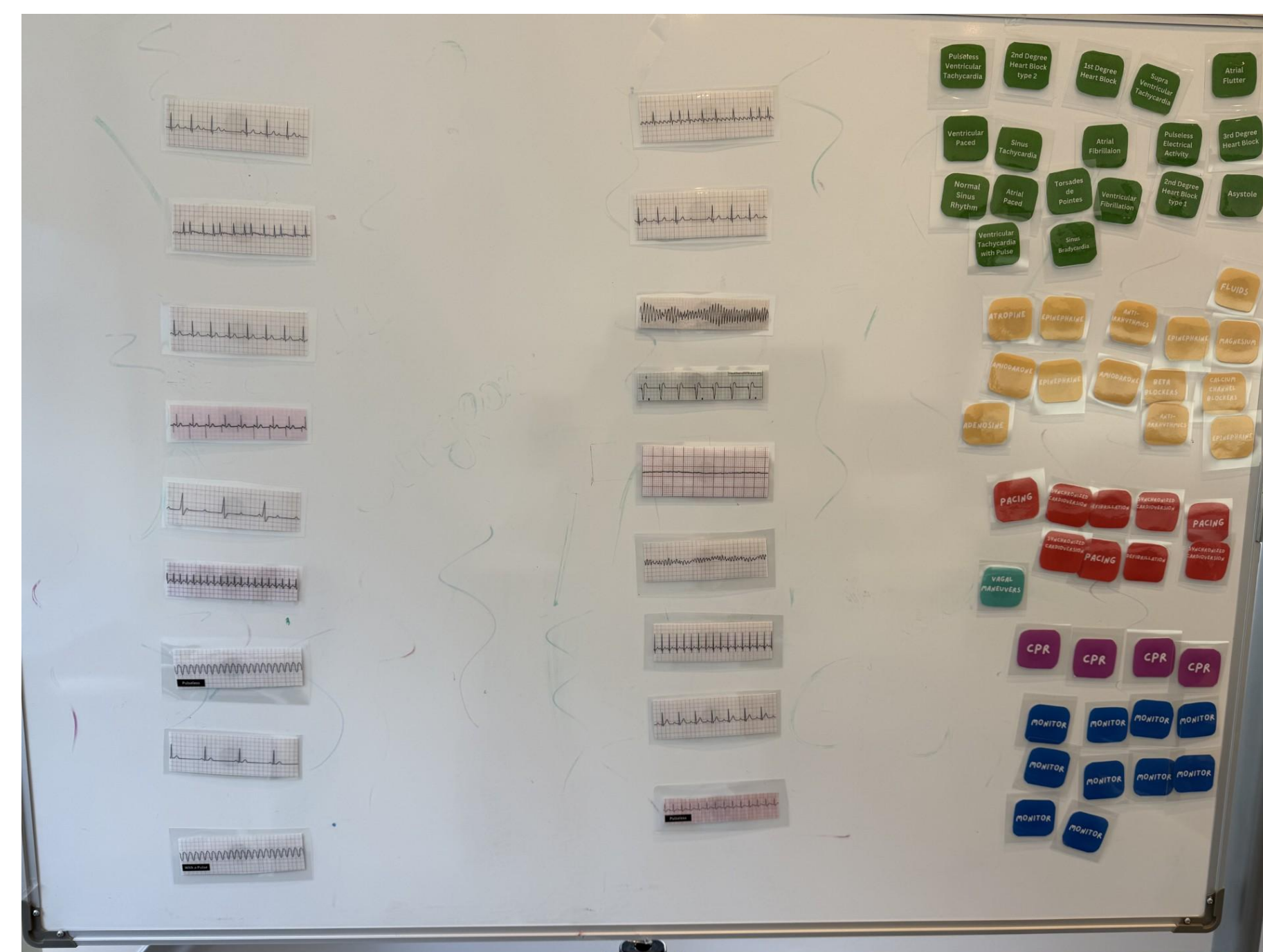


Figure 1: EKG Puzzle Set-Up Before Solving



Figure 2: EKG Puzzle After Solving

Statement of Successful Practice

A total of 154 nurses completed the EKG puzzle activity, 98 of which completed a follow-up survey evaluating their experience. Using a Likert Scale, respondents rated their experience to statements from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Among the survey respondents (Table 1):

- 94.9% agreed or strongly agreed that the EKG puzzle was less anxiety-provoking than a traditional test
- 97.9% agreed or strongly agreed that the puzzle was useful to their nursing practice.
- 96.9% expressed a preference of gamification over traditional testing as an assessment method

These findings highlight the effectiveness of gamification in reducing test-related anxiety while reinforcing critical clinical skills relevant to perianesthesia nursing..

Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing

The success of the EKG puzzle suggests that incorporating interactive, engaging educational methods can enhance learning outcomes and staff confidence in critical skills. The high acuity environment of the perianesthesia specialty, where timely recognition of cardiac dysrhythmias can impact patient safety is critical. This approach offers a promising model for competency assessment and education, and may improve knowledge retention, foster team engagement, and support a culture of continuous learning.



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