

How Do Healthcare Professionals Perceive Delphi Panels and Use Study Outcomes?

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Objective

To evaluate the extent to which healthcare professionals who had participated in Delphi panels applied study outcomes to daily practice.

Background

- A Delphi panel is a structured, iterative approach to consensus generation (Figure 1). They are increasingly used to gather real-world healthcare perspectives, refining and improving application of health technologies.
- However, the extent to which healthcare professionals (HCPs) share and use the outcomes from Delphi panels in daily practice is unclear.

Methods

- 11 HCPs (all ophthalmology surgeons) who had originally participated in two consecutive Delphi panels relating to a novel surgical device they had extensive experience in using were invited to participate in an online survey.^{1,2}
- The original Delphi panels sought to provide recommendations for patient selection, surgical technique and post-operative care for new adopters of the device, to guide their practice.
- Here, we present results from a short survey that included 16 questions across three topics:
 - Three questions examined participants' experience of Delphi panels, prior to their involvement with the original Delphi panels.
 - Ten questions asked participants about their engagement with outcomes from the two Delphi panels, ranging from changes in surgical technique to wider departmental initiatives.
 - The final three questions asked participants about future applications for Delphi panels in ophthalmology, and their use for informing guidelines more widely.
- Quantitative responses were analysed in Microsoft Excel.
- Qualitative free-text responses were analysed in Microsoft Word and collated into themes.

Results

- Eight* HCPs completed the survey. Five HCPs had Delphi panel experience prior to their involvement in the Delphi panels on the use of a surgical device.
- Key findings from the survey are presented in Figure 2 and highlight the diverse ways that HCPs perceive and engage with Delphi panels.

Conclusion

Our results suggest that Delphi panel study outcomes can influence daily practice for participating HCPs and potentially their colleagues.

The HCPs agreed that Delphi panels add value and may be useful prior to or in combination with long-term study data, potentially informing guidelines.

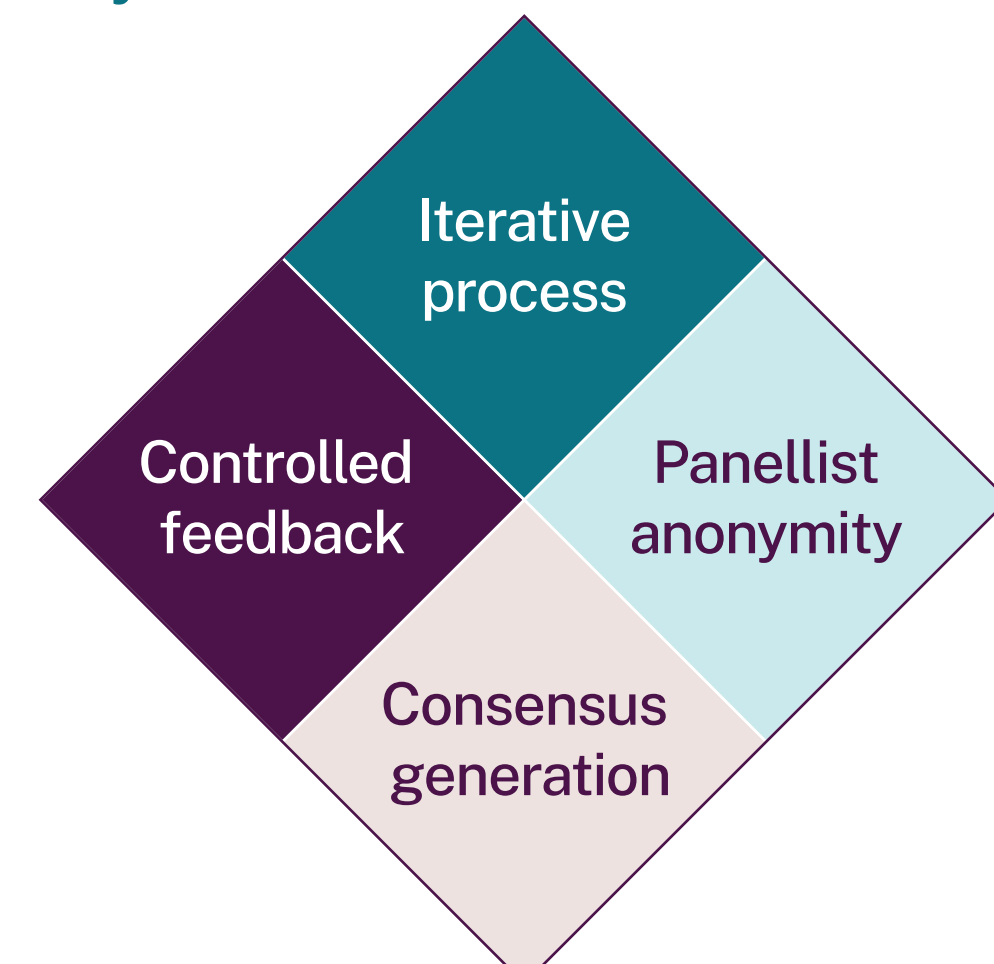
While this study assessed the short-term impact of two Delphi panels, future research should explore long-term outcomes and the role of Delphi panels in guideline development.

FIGURE 1

What is a Delphi panel?

The Delphi method is a structured and systematic technique, often used to generate consensus on specific issues through engagement with a group of experts in a particular field

Key characteristics



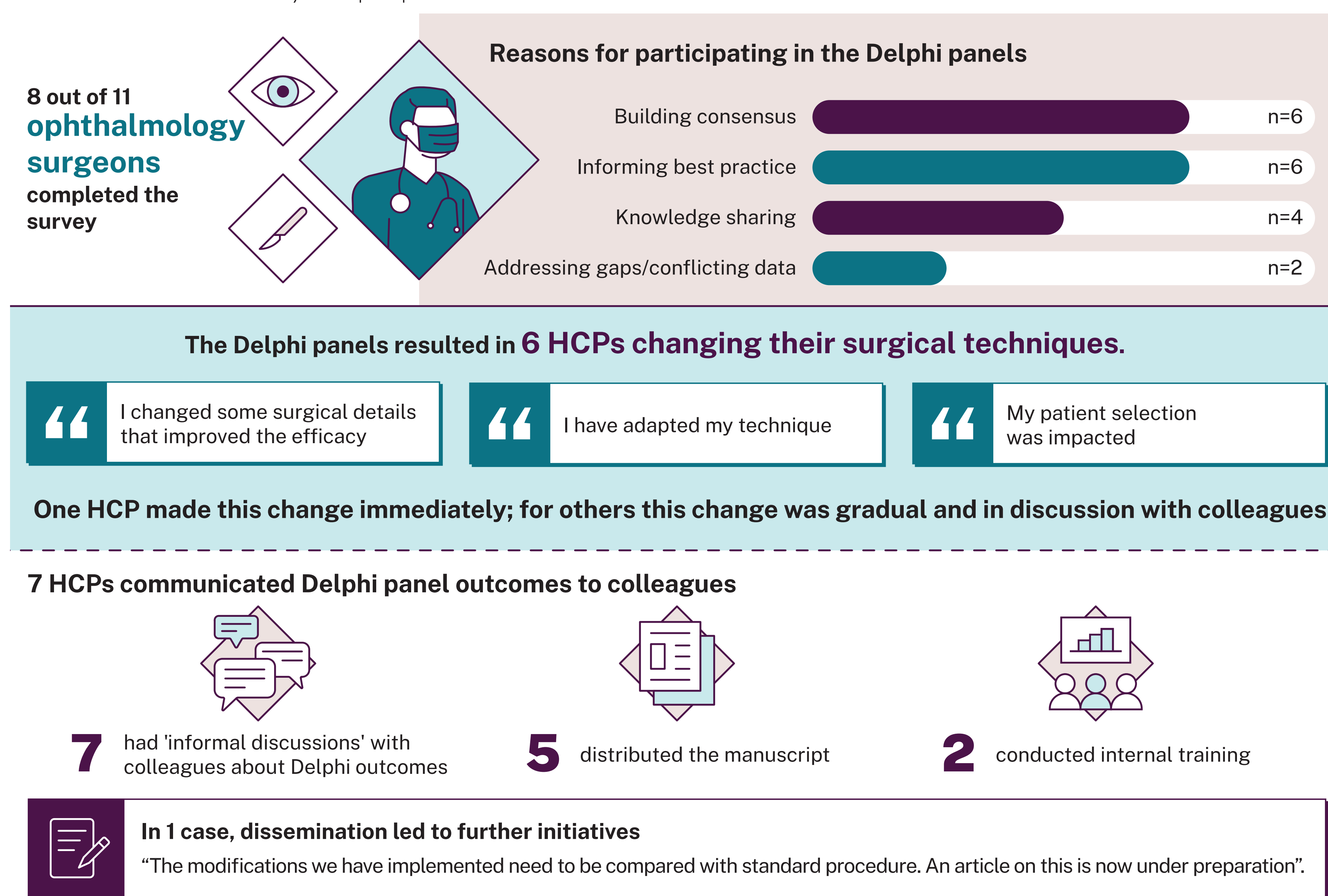
Why conduct a Delphi panel?*

- “ They complement the available scientific evidence and fill in gaps without evidence
- “ They facilitate the sharing of experience and knowledge
- “ The discussions are likely to be of a high-level
- “ It is important to obtain consensus and standardise approaches where possible
- “ It is good to collect knowledge to share with those who are newer to the field

*Quotes collected as part of the study survey

FIGURE 2

Outcomes from the study: Delphi panels and their use



HCPs considered the future applications of Delphi panels in ophthalmology to be:

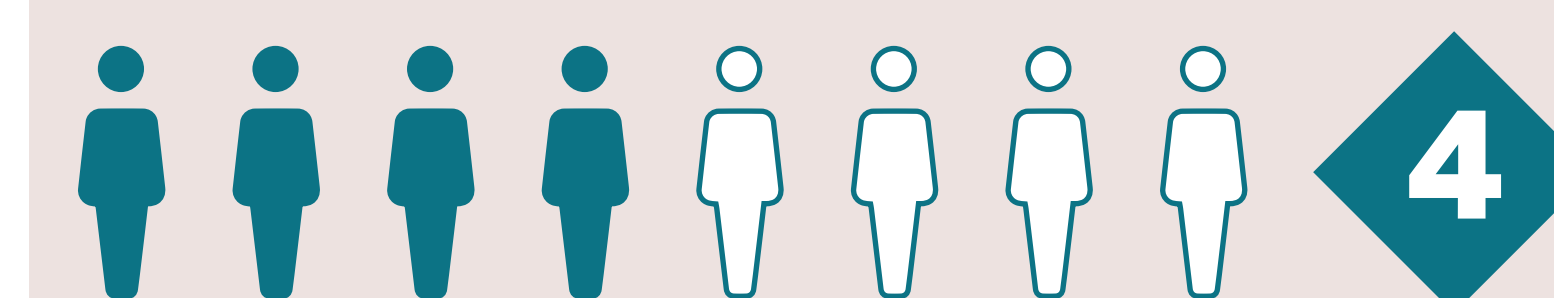
Clarifying approaches



Obtaining consensus on research priorities



Generating evidence where gaps exist



4 panellists mentioned that Delphi panels may be used to inform guidelines:

Delphi panel recommendations could be used to define the place of new surgeries and be quoted in some guidelines.

They can play a role in generating guidelines, especially where RCTs or other valuable evidence methods are difficult to get.

Delphi panel and expert consensus could be incorporated into guidelines and standard of care only when evidence-based medicine is lacking.

We use a similar process of agreement in my country. Larger countries could benefit from having Delphi panel consensus for guidelines with appointed steering committees.



Abbreviations: HCP: healthcare professional; RCT: randomised controlled trial.

References: ¹Khawaja AP, et al Ophthalmol Ther 2022;11:1743-1766; ²Khawaja AP, et al Ophthalmol Ther 2024;13:1569-1588.

Acknowledgements: The authors thank Fay Angel, Costello Medical, for graphic design assistance. We also thank Luis Abegão Pinto, Florent Aptel, Henny Beckers, Giorgio Marchini, Jose Martínez de la Casa, Jan H. Simonsen & Clemens Vass for their contributions.

Footnote: *One HCP provided their response over email and did not complete the full survey.