

Attitude to acupuncture and homeopathy among doctors in a research position – a survey

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OBJECTIVE

The aim of this study is to describe use of and attitudes to acupuncture and homeopathy among doctors in a research position compared to clinicians in hospital and general practice.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Two separate questionnaires on attitudes towards acupuncture and homeopathy were mailed to two independent random samples of members of the Norwegian Medical Association. The response rates were 77% (acupuncture) and 71% (homeopathy), Figure 1 and 2.

ACUPUNCTURE

Acupuncture

- Have you ever been treated with acupuncture?
Yes ☐
No ☐
- If yes, did you have any benefit of the treatment?
Yes ☐
No ☐
I don't know... ☐
- Acupuncture can be a treatment alternative in chronic backpain. What proportion of the effect do you think is attributable to a pure placebo effect?
0% 25% 50% 75% 100%
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
- Which position in the health care system do you think acupuncture should have?
Acupuncture is already integrated. ☐
Acupuncture should be integrated ☐
Acupuncture should be forbidden as treatment ☐
Acupuncture should be rejected until it is evidence based ☐

Figure 1. Questionnaire for acupuncture.

HOMEOPATHY

Homeopathy

- Have you ever been treated with homeopathy?
Yes ☐
No ☐
- If yes, did you have any benefit of the treatment?
Yes ☐
No ☐
I don't know... ☐
- Homeopathy can be a treatment alternative in anxiety. What proportion of the effect do you think is attributable to a pure placebo effect?
0% 25% 50% 75% 100%
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
- Which position in the health care system do you think homeopathy should have?
Homeopathy should be forbidden as treatment ☐
Homeopathy should be integrated ☐
Homeopathy practiced by doctors should be integrated. ☐
Homeopathy should be rejected until it is evidence based ☐

Figure 2. Questionnaire for homeopathy.

RESULTS

15.1% of doctors in a research position have been treated with homeopathy, compared to 5.0% of hospital doctors and 9.7% of general practitioners ($p < 0.001$). The difference in proportion reporting effect of the therapy was not statistically significant. 7.7% of doctors in a research position have been treated with acupuncture, compared to 7.2% of hospital doctors and 8.3% of general practitioners ($p = 1.00$). The difference in proportion reporting effect of the therapy was not statistically significant. 35% of doctors in a research position find more than 50% of the effect of acupuncture to be placebo ($p < 0.001$ when compared to the other groups). For homeopathy the proportion with the same opinion is around 60% for all groups ($p = 0.056$). There is a statistically significant difference between groups in the view of both homeopathy's and acupuncture's place in the health system ($p \leq 0.001$). Figure 3 and 4.

ACUPUNCTURE

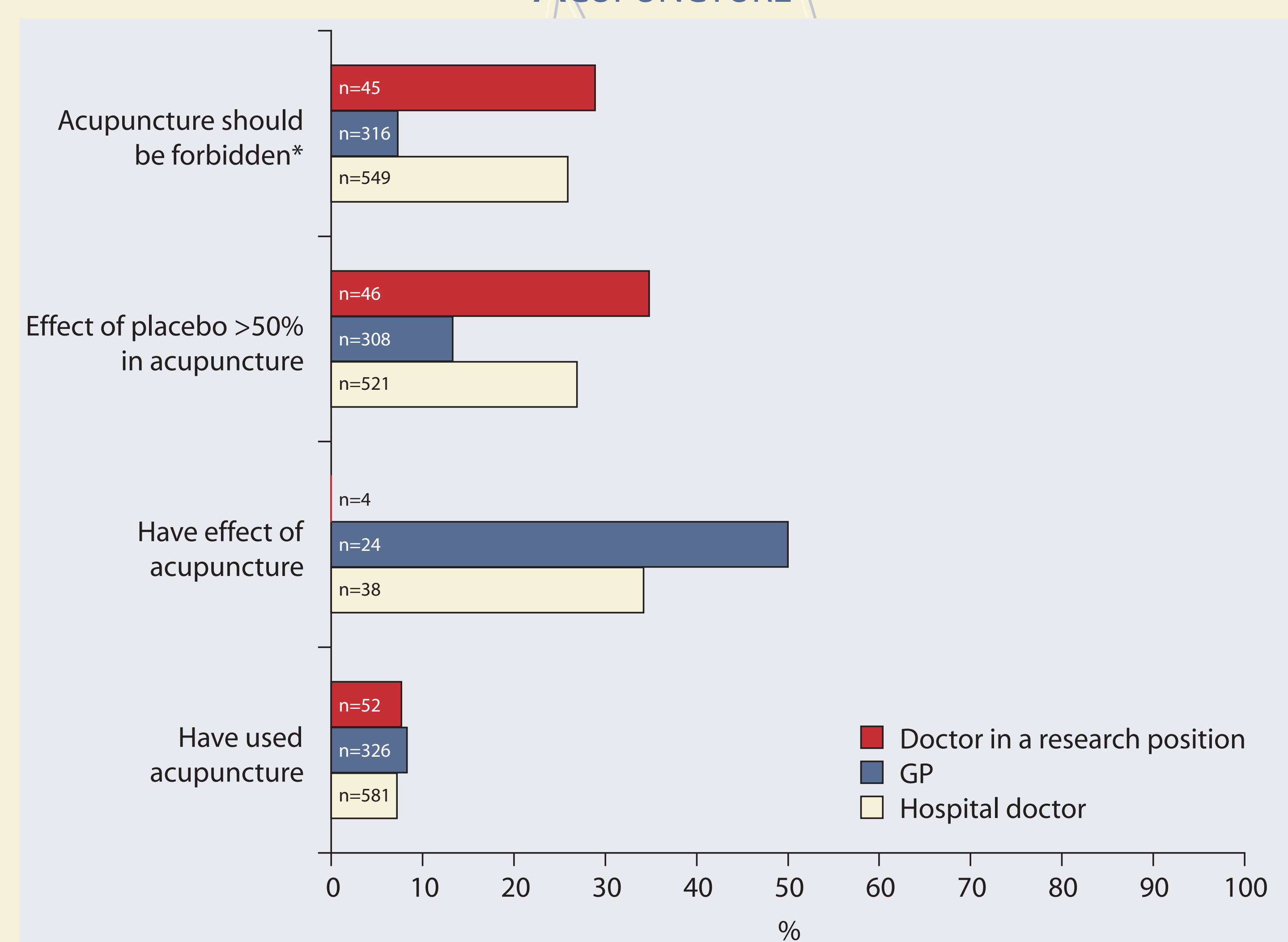


Figure 3. Attitude to acupuncture. *This covers both the categories "acupuncture should be forbidden" and "acupuncture should be rejected until it is evidence based".

HOMEOPATHY

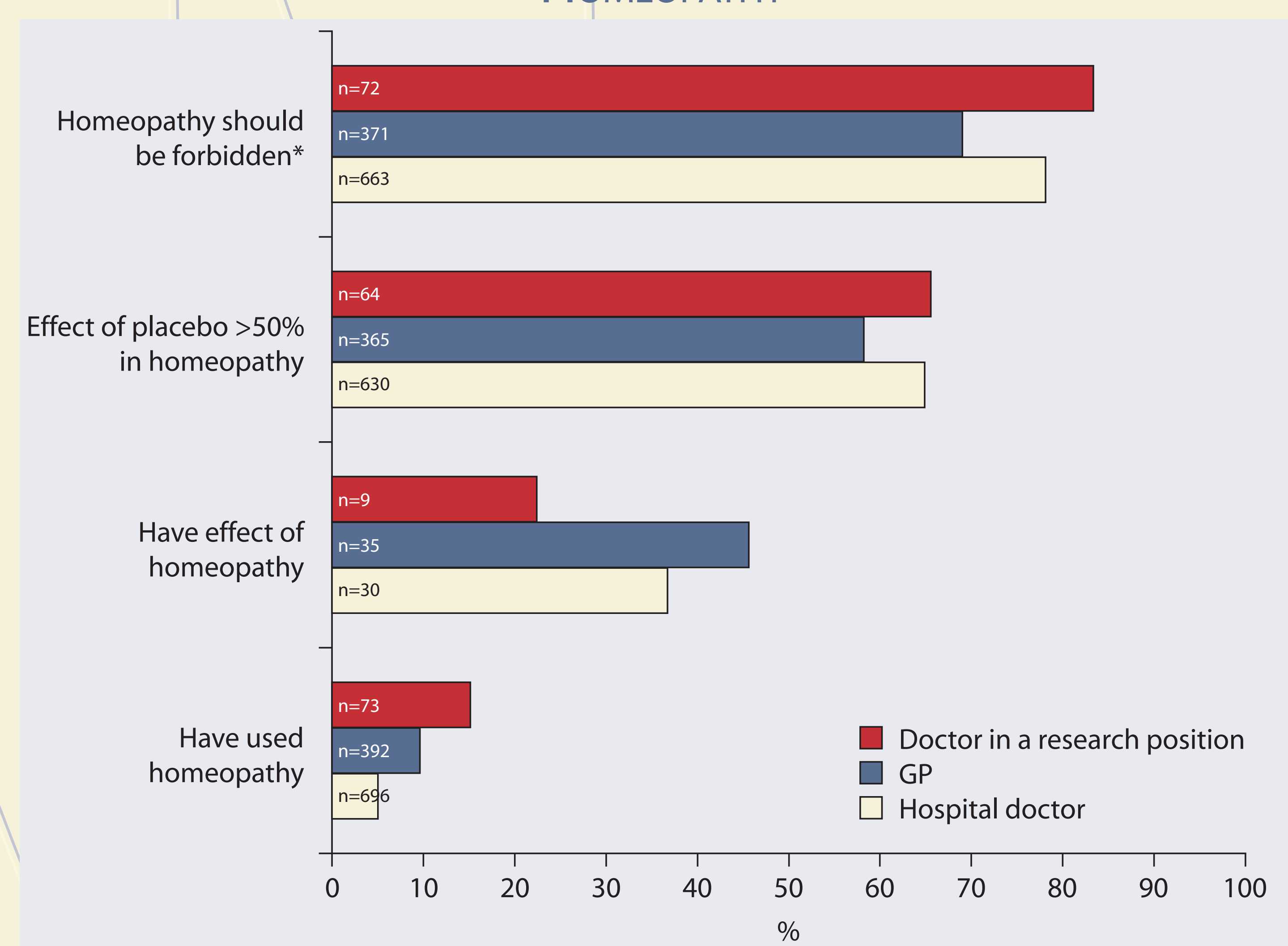


Figure 4. Attitude to homeopathy. *This covers both the categories "homeopathy should be forbidden as treatment" and "homeopathy should be rejected until it is evidence based".

CONCLUSION

This study shows that doctors in a research position are most sceptical to integrate the therapies in the public health care system. Doctors working in research are even more negative to acupuncture and homeopathy than their hospital and general practice colleagues, although they themselves have tried homeopathy more.