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Study Purpose

- Examine an innovative multidisciplinary consultation team model comprised of substance abuse, mental health, domestic violence and child protection professionals.
- Identify prevailing client problems that lead to requesting multidisciplinary consultations.
- Identify effective strategies employed by professionals and guidelines for best practices in multidisciplinary collaboration.
- Recognize challenges in collaboration.

Study Site



Clinical Consultation Program (CCP) at NYC ACS offers 12 Clinical Consultation Teams, comprised of mental health, substance abuse, and domestic violence consultants.

CCP consultants support and educate child welfare staff in making casework decisions, facilitate access to community-based services, and provide office-based training in their respective disciplines.

Method

Mixed-method study

Qualitative: in-depth face-to-face interviews

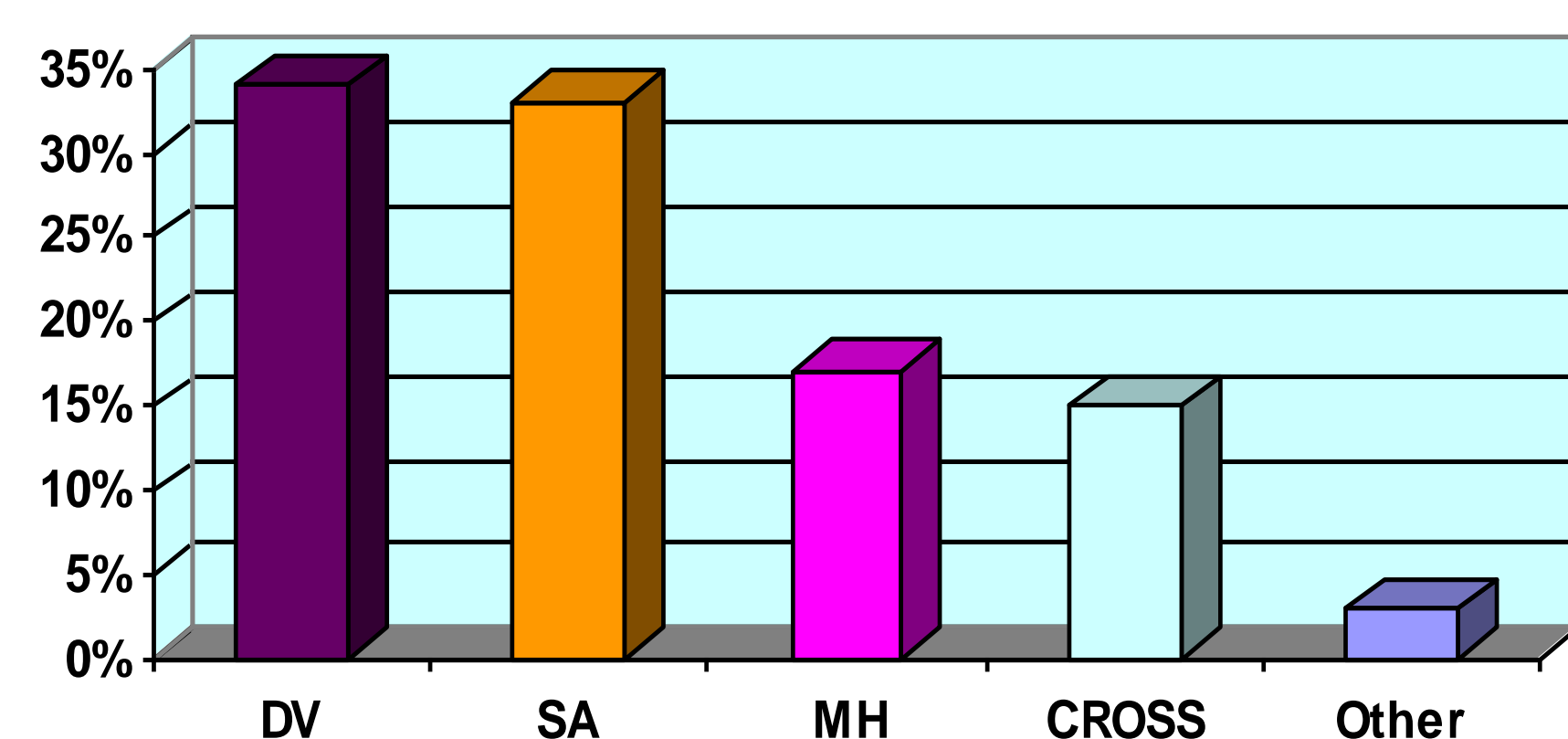
- CPS workers (N=30)
- CPS supervisors (N=30)
- Consultants and team coordinators (N=30)

Quantitative: data-mining

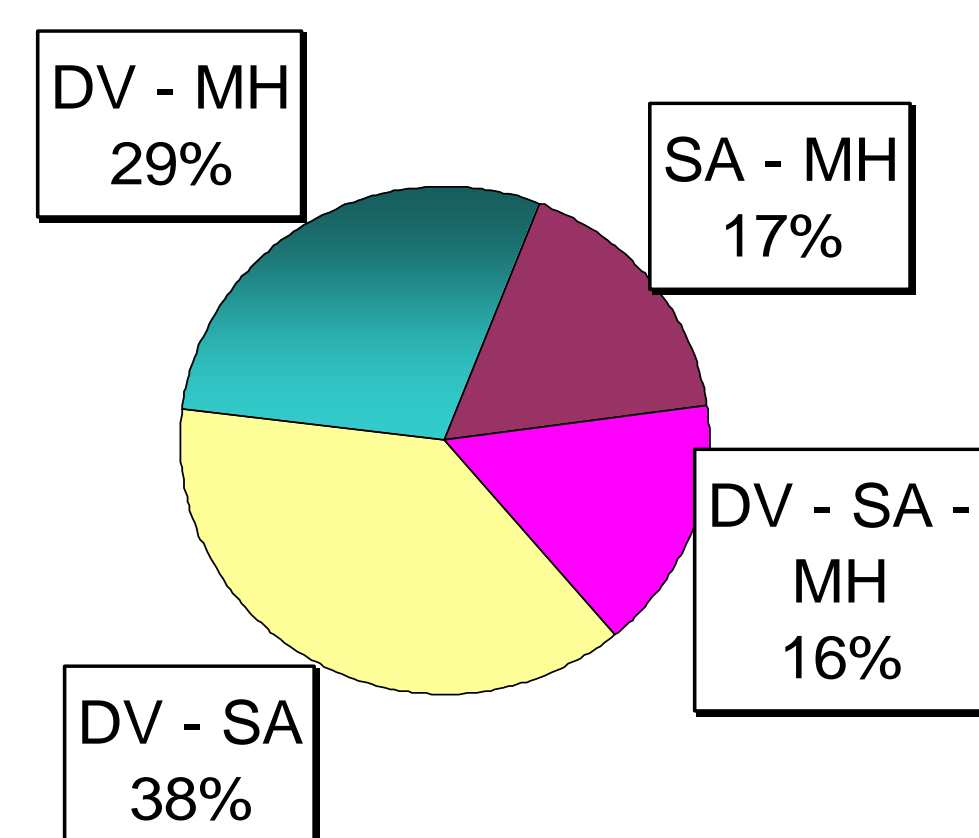
- Consultation evaluation forms (N=455)
- Office-based training evaluation forms (N=500)
- Consultation request/response forms (N=500)

Consultation Types

The most frequent **consultation types** were "single" domestic violence (33.6%) and substance abuse (33%). **Figure 1:**



Among the **multidisciplinary (cross-) consultations**, various combinations were identified: **Figure 2:**



Reasons for Requesting Consultations

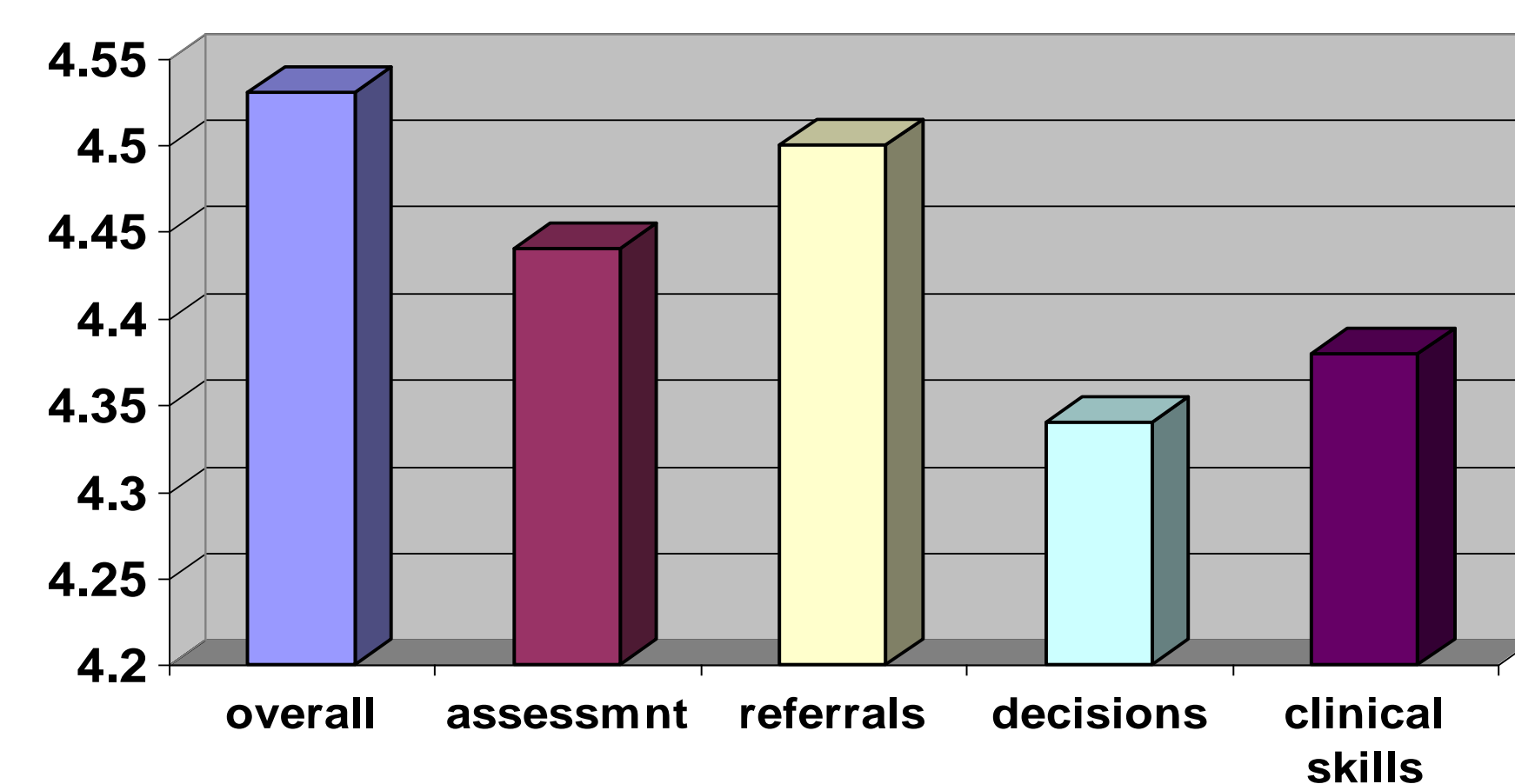
The most frequent reasons that CPS workers requested consultations were for **assessment** purposes: domestic violence assessment (40%), substance abuse assessment (37%), and mental health assessment (35%) **Table 1:**

	Assessment	Further exploration	Referral
DV	39.6%	22.6%	20.2%
MH	34.8%	16.8%	21.2%
SA	36.6%	14.0%	18.4%

* The categories are not mutually exclusive.

Satisfaction with Consultations

Satisfaction scores were rated on a scale of "1" to "5" with "5" representing the highest level of satisfaction. Overall, the satisfaction of CPS workers with consultation services was extremely high ($M=4.53$, $SD=.77$). **Figure 3:**



Prevailing Client Issues Identified in Consultations

Among the most **prevailing problems** identified during consultations, in 44.6% of cases, there was evidence of intimate partner violence and 42.2% of cases involved parental alcohol or substance abuse. **Table 2:**

Problems identified*	N	%
Intimate partner violence	223	44.6
Parental alcohol and/or substance abuse	211	42.2
Child psychological/psychiatric problems	123	24.6
Parental psychological/psychiatric problems	113	22.6
Parental violence towards child(ren)	93	18.6
Parenting problems	53	10.6
Substance toxicology	49	9.8
Housing problems	47	9.4
Educational neglect	45	9.0
Child school performance problems	33	6.6
Other family member violence	30	6.0
Child alcohol and/or substance abuse	30	6.0
Other problems	136	27.2

* The categories are not mutually exclusive.

Benefits, identified by CPS workers and supervisors

In relation to consultation process and outcomes:

1. Obtaining a complete picture

- Discussing the case thoroughly
- Prioritizing issues
- Coming to a consensus
- Verifying workers' decisions
- Generating a workable plan

2. Insights and learnings

- Broadening views, gaining new perspectives
- Discipline-specific knowledge
- Interviewing skills
- Obtaining resources

3. Improved client outcomes

In relation to qualities of consultants:

Knowledgeability

"It's different from talking to your supervisor. When you're talking to the consultant, it's strictly professional, it's all about services, it's all about the client. When you're talking to your supervisor, sometimes it feels punitive: 'What haven't you done?'" (CPS Worker)

Accessibility and availability

Communication & interpersonal skills

- Supportiveness
- Respectfulness
- People-friendliness

Elements of successful teamwork among consultants, identified by consultants

Interdependence: "all are dependent on the others to accomplish their goals and tasks."

"There are so many different issues going on with the family that we always have to be aware and consult with each other to be able to respond to clients' needs."

Flexibility: "deliberate occurrence of role blurring," "knowledge about each others roles and disciplines."

"We met for a cross-consultation and we were asking questions across each others' disciplines without being so rigid in ours, which is really important. We look at these cases on a case by case basis, we try to be flexible, especially when we're working with other consultants."

Understanding that **all disciplines are equally important**

"It is willingness to know that there are other perspectives and different lenses, and it's OK to disagree. We have to try not to worry so much about our particular disciplines but what would make more sense for this family."

Keeping the child-welfare issues predominate

"We learn to prioritize what's important in the case... and there is no recipe book. First is the safety of the child..."

Interpersonal communication skills:

respectfulness, tactfulness, supportiveness, friendliness, and ability to listen

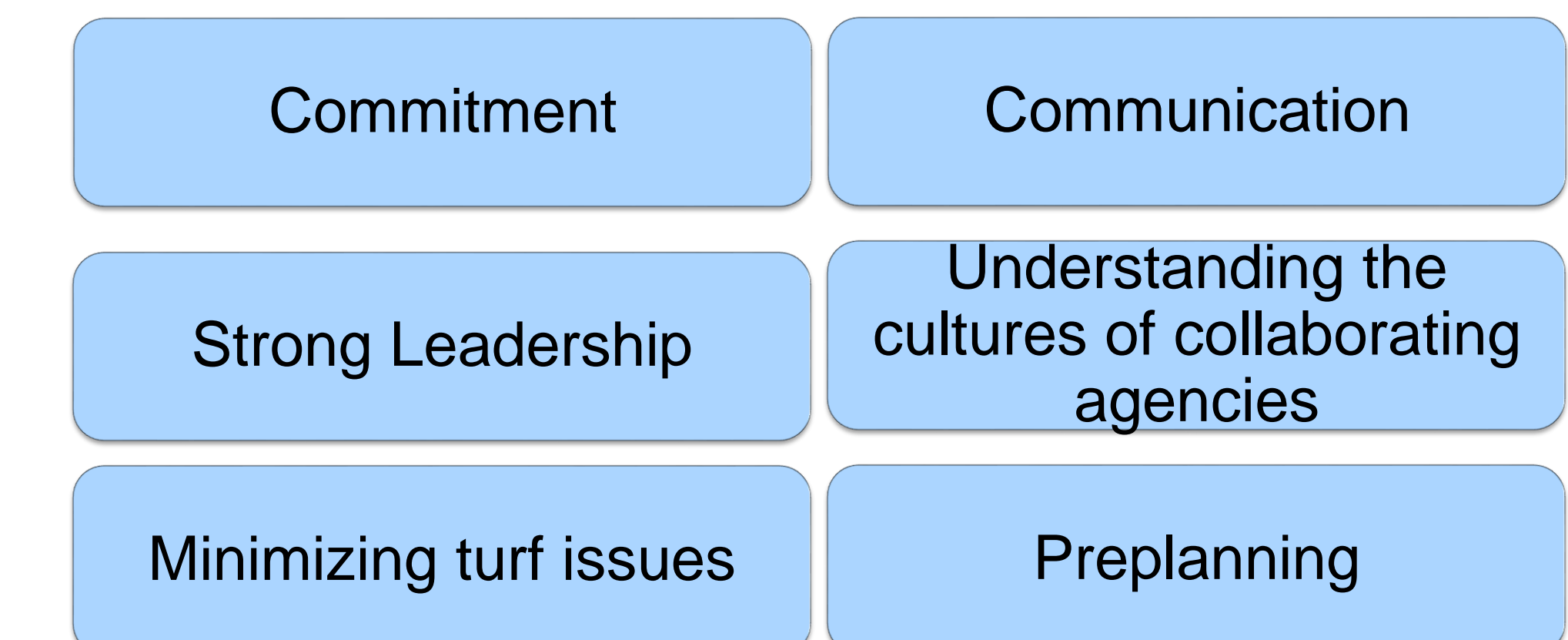
"For us, it's been learning when to stay quiet, write down your own questions on a separate note pad until it's your turn to ask. How to respect someone's opinions even though you may disagree with."

Effective team leader

"I always use this analogy of the orchestra—we got drums there, we got wind instruments, and they all can play separately but then when they come together, they have to be able to harmonize, and if they can't, they're just going to make a lot of noise. It's my job as a team coordinator to orchestrate them—to come in, step out, move up..."

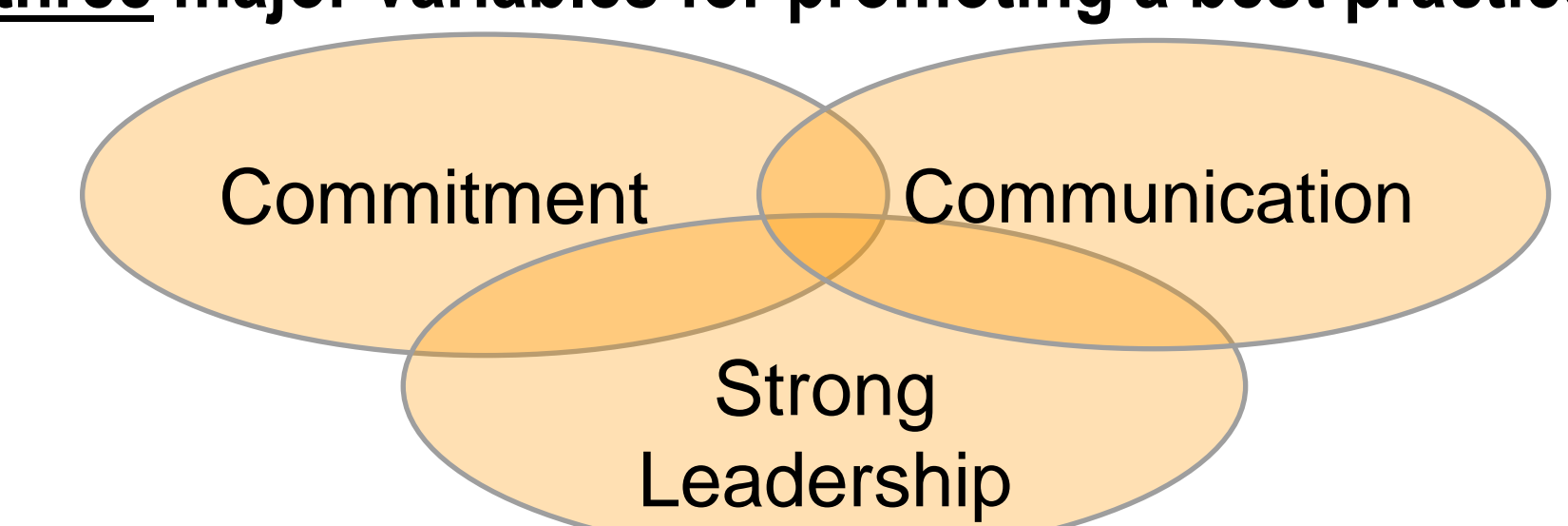
Achieving Best Practice

Seven factors were identified as most important in achieving a best practice in multidisciplinary consultation on all levels - case, organizational, & policy:



Structural Support and Resources

These factors are interrelated and can be summed up into **three major variables** for promoting a best practice:



Conclusion

- Many factors contribute to shaping a best practice in clinical consultation.
- Multidisciplinary collaboration is multidimensional, interactional, and developmental.
- 'Best practice' is a developmental process that takes time and efforts to achieve.
- Preplanning, continued hard work, strategic and deliberate actions, and support (formal and informal) are needed to sustain best practices.
- Learning from mistakes, challenges and problems can help overcome future barriers that might jeopardize collaboration.