



Experience with and perception of research among first year osteopathic medical students

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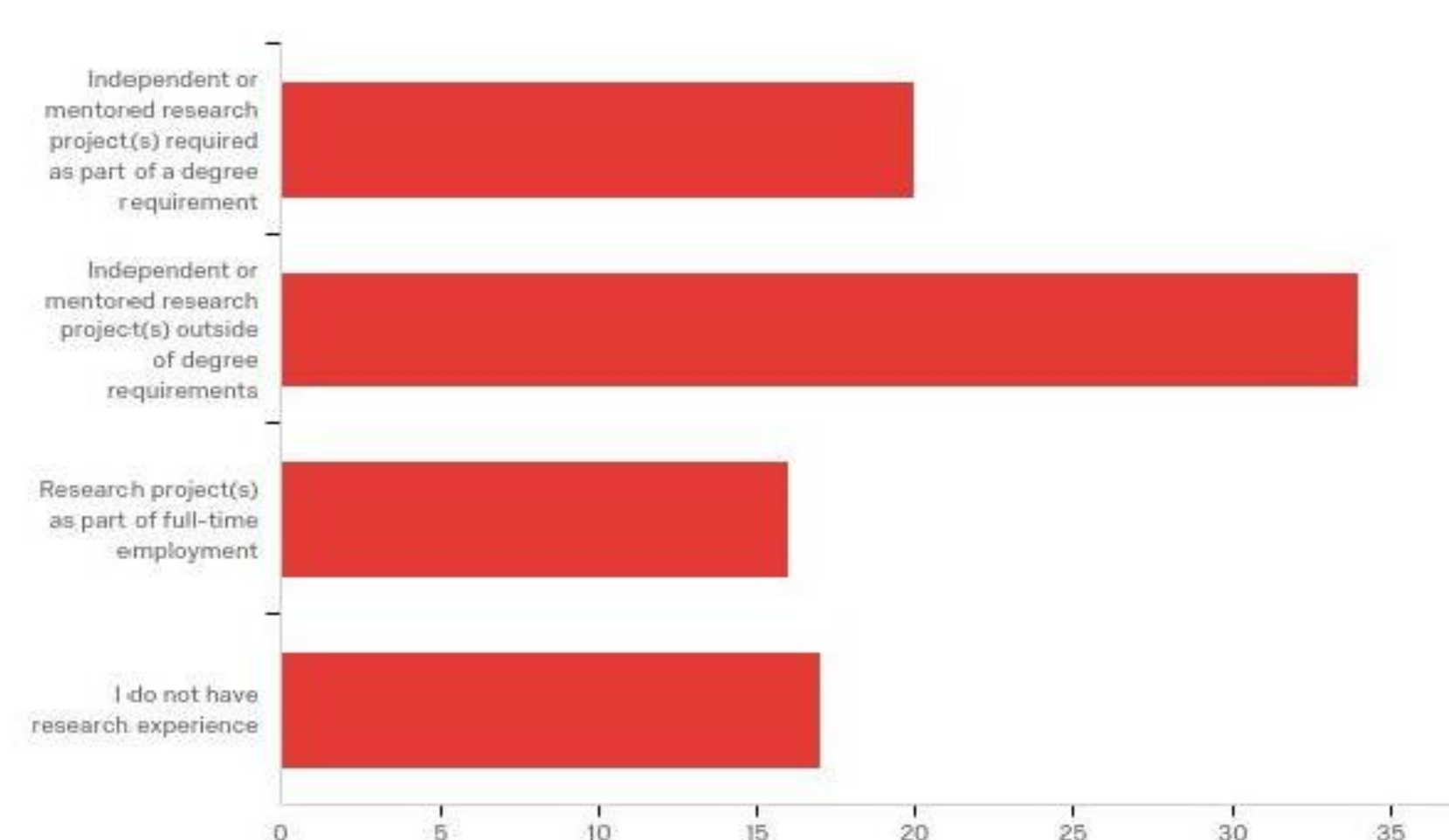
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There are limited data regarding the level of research experience and/or interest among osteopathic medical students despite a rapidly increasing enrollment and expansion of the number of osteopathic medical schools. A 2016 study of first year osteopathic medical students at WesternU/COMP and WesternU/COMP-NW indicated that 81% of respondents had prior research experience and 75% were either currently doing research or were interested in doing research during medical school. In the present study, we extended that survey to Marian University in order to determine the level of research experience and interest among first-year osteopathic medical students. Based on a response rate of 41%, an overwhelming majority of respondents reported prior research experience (>80%), with 13% of those students having garnered peer-reviewed publication(s). This is consistent with a strong perception of research being valuable, with 96.92% indicating some level of importance and 27.69% indicating "very" or "extremely" important. Interestingly, fewer respondents (53.34%) are either currently participating in research or affirmed interest in performing research during medical school, with the highest level of interest in clinical research (32.37%) followed by basic science (20.23%). Regarding incentives that might encourage participation in research, respondents prefer monetary compensation (40.19%) and/or extra credit in courses (39.25%). Reported barriers to performing research include possible negative impact on coursework (65.93%) and preference for other extracurricular activities (23.08%). Although a majority of the students (81.54%) reported awareness that research opportunities are available at MU-COM, fewer (50.79%) were aware of whether opportunities exist in their specific field of interest. Our findings indicate a strong positive perception of research among MU-COM students and highlight opportunities for improved communication of availability and enhancement of the research environment through incentivization and/or removal of perceived barriers.

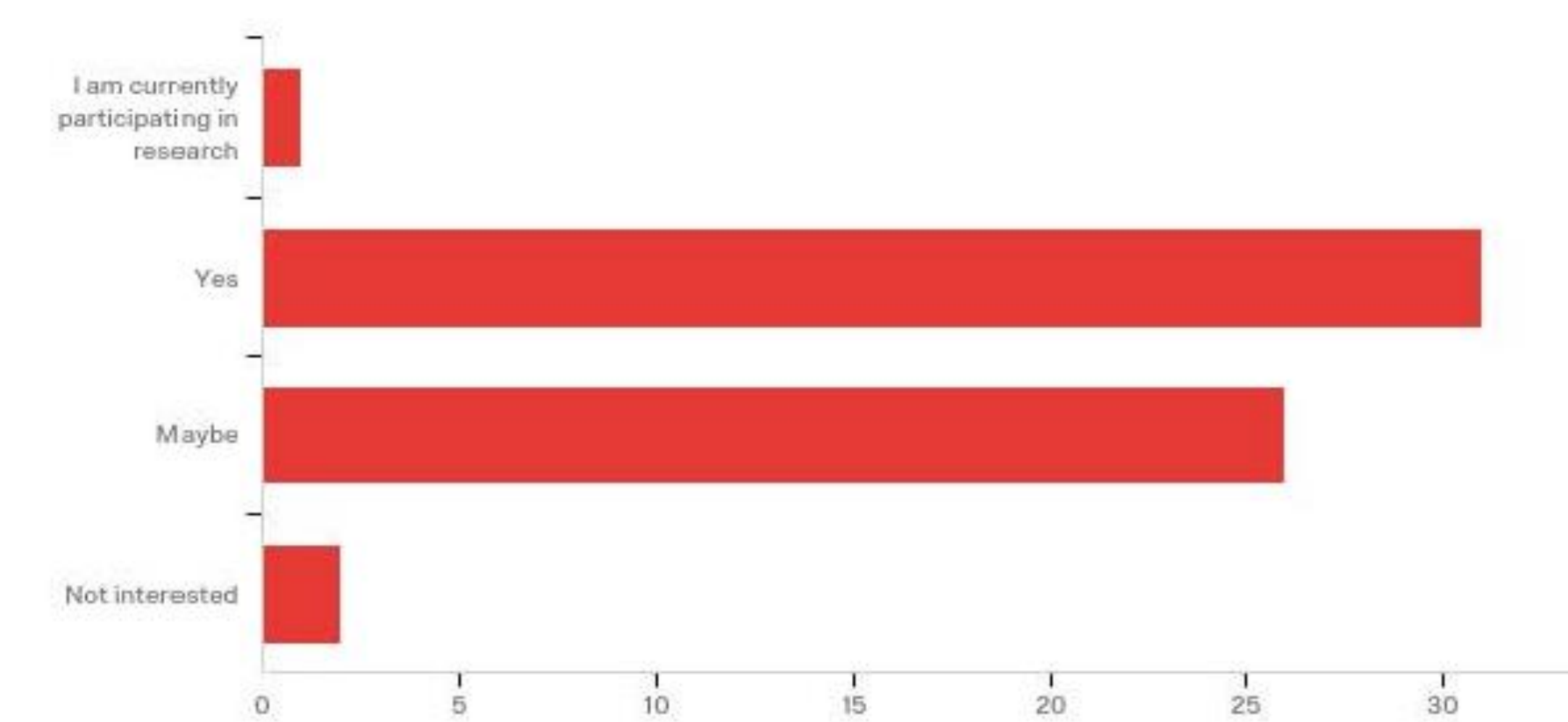
Methods

- A fifteen-question electronic survey instrument was developed using Qualtrics and approved (exempt status) by the MU Institutional Review Board
- Two weeks after orientation, a solicitation email containing a link to the survey instrument was distributed to the MU OMS1 listserv
- Responses were collected for two weeks and the survey closed
- Identical survey using similar timing parameters was also administered at COMP, COMP-NW, KYCOM, and WVSOM

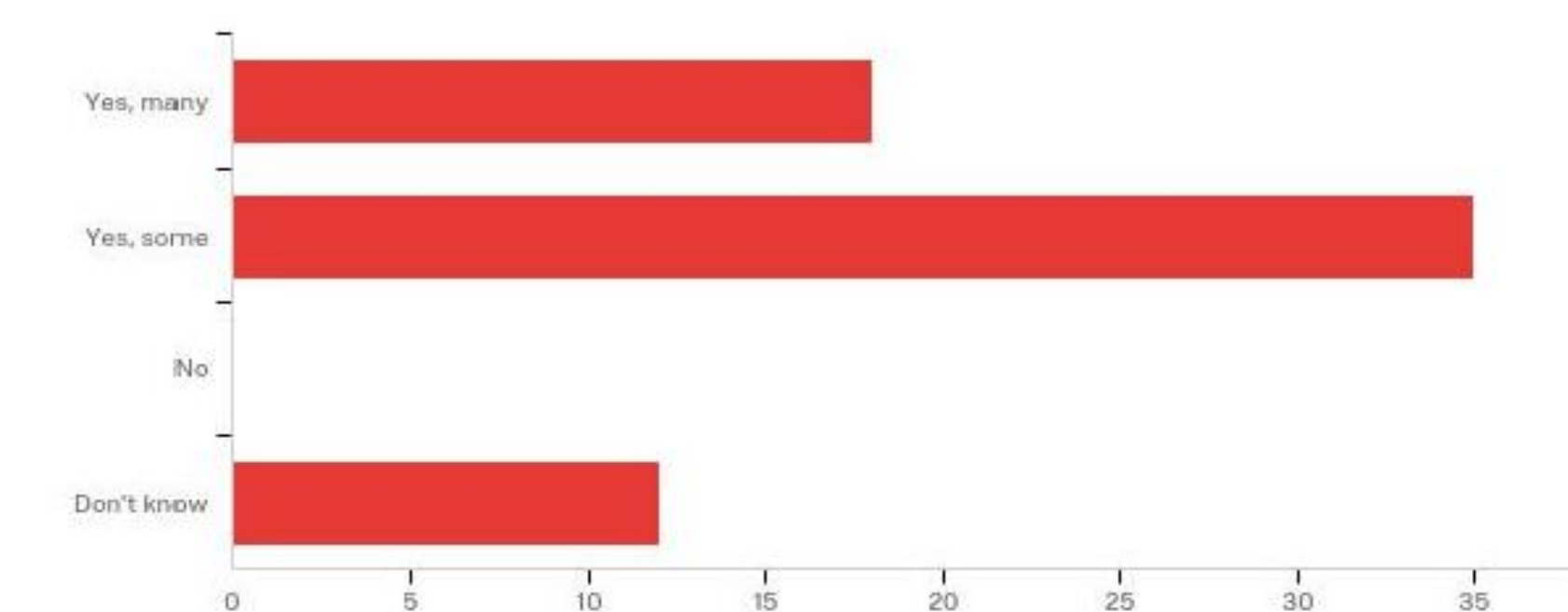
QID5 - Please indicate your level of research experience prior to entering medical school (select all that apply).



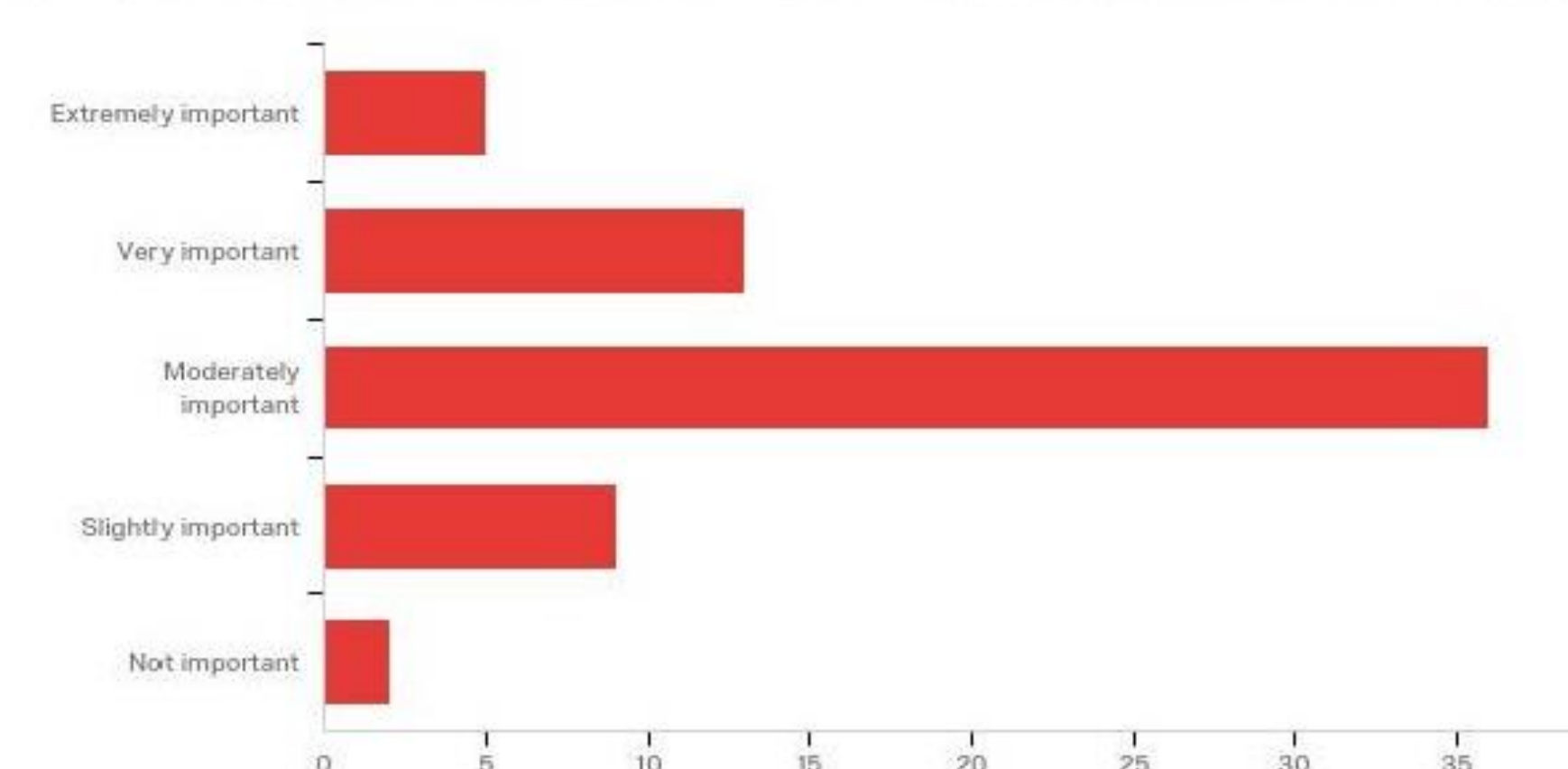
QID7 - Are you interested in participating in research during medical school?



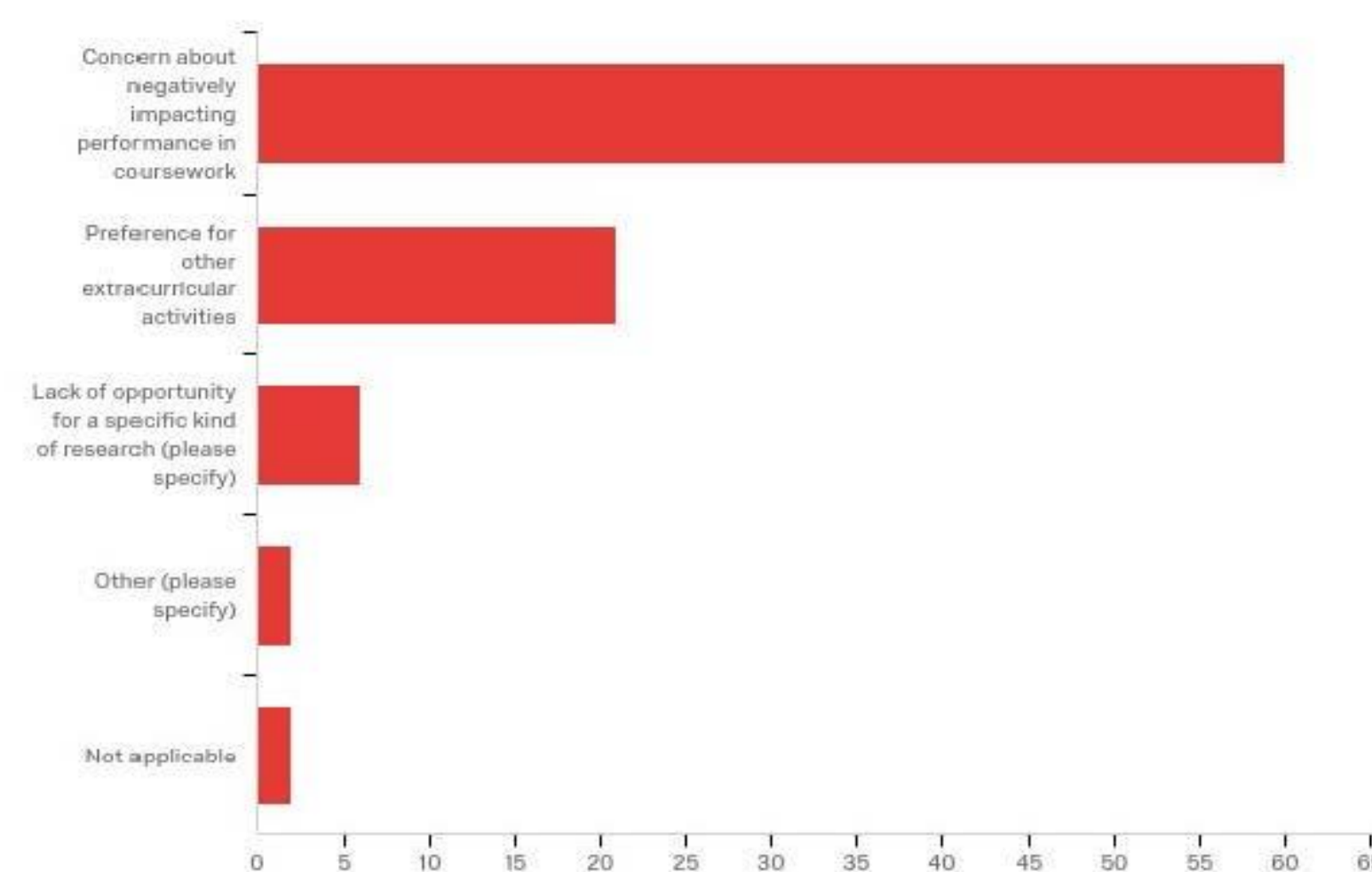
QID8 - In your opinion, do opportunities exist at [QID1-ChoiceGroup-SelectedChoices] for students to participate in research during medical school?



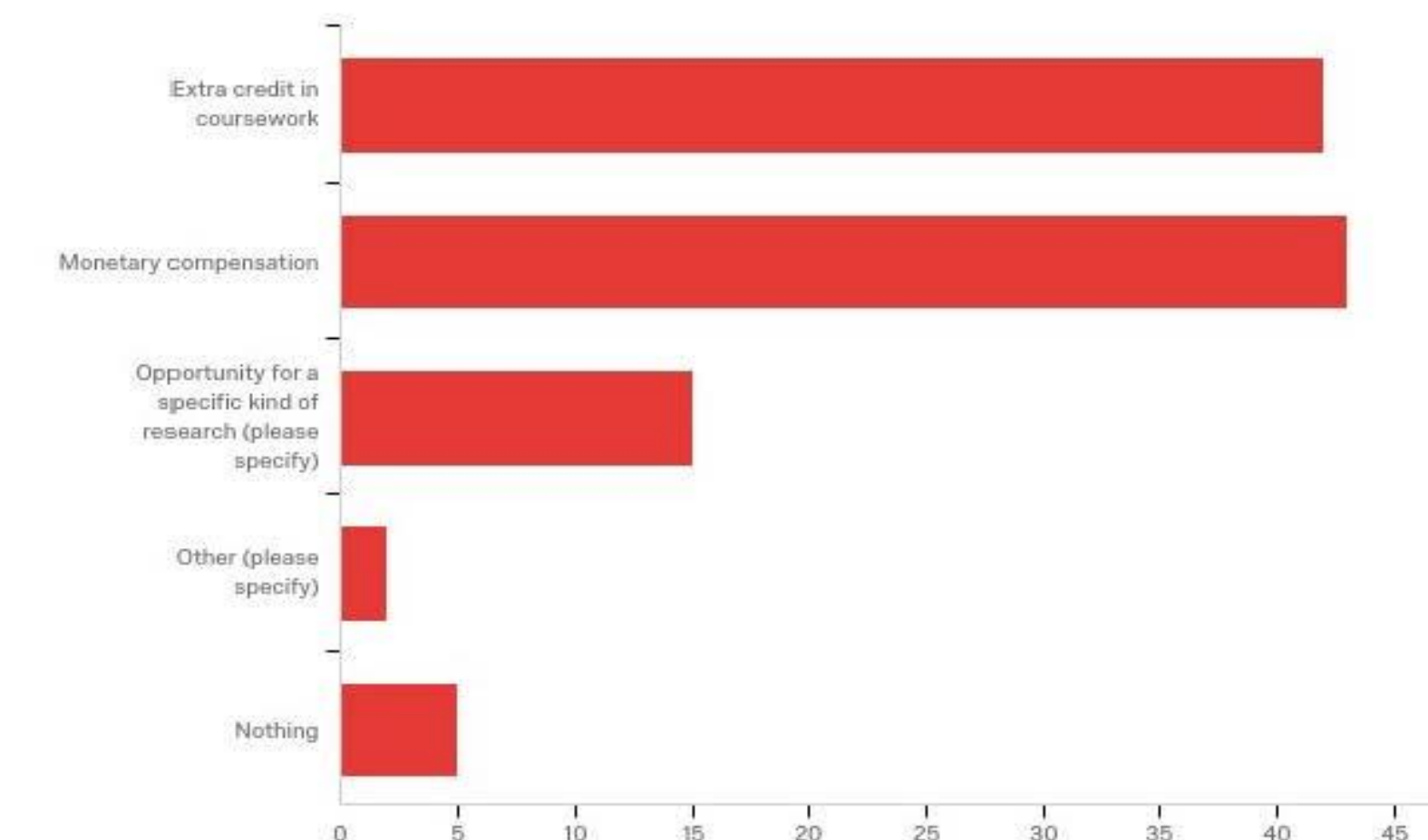
QID10 - In your opinion, how valuable is it for medical students to engage in research?



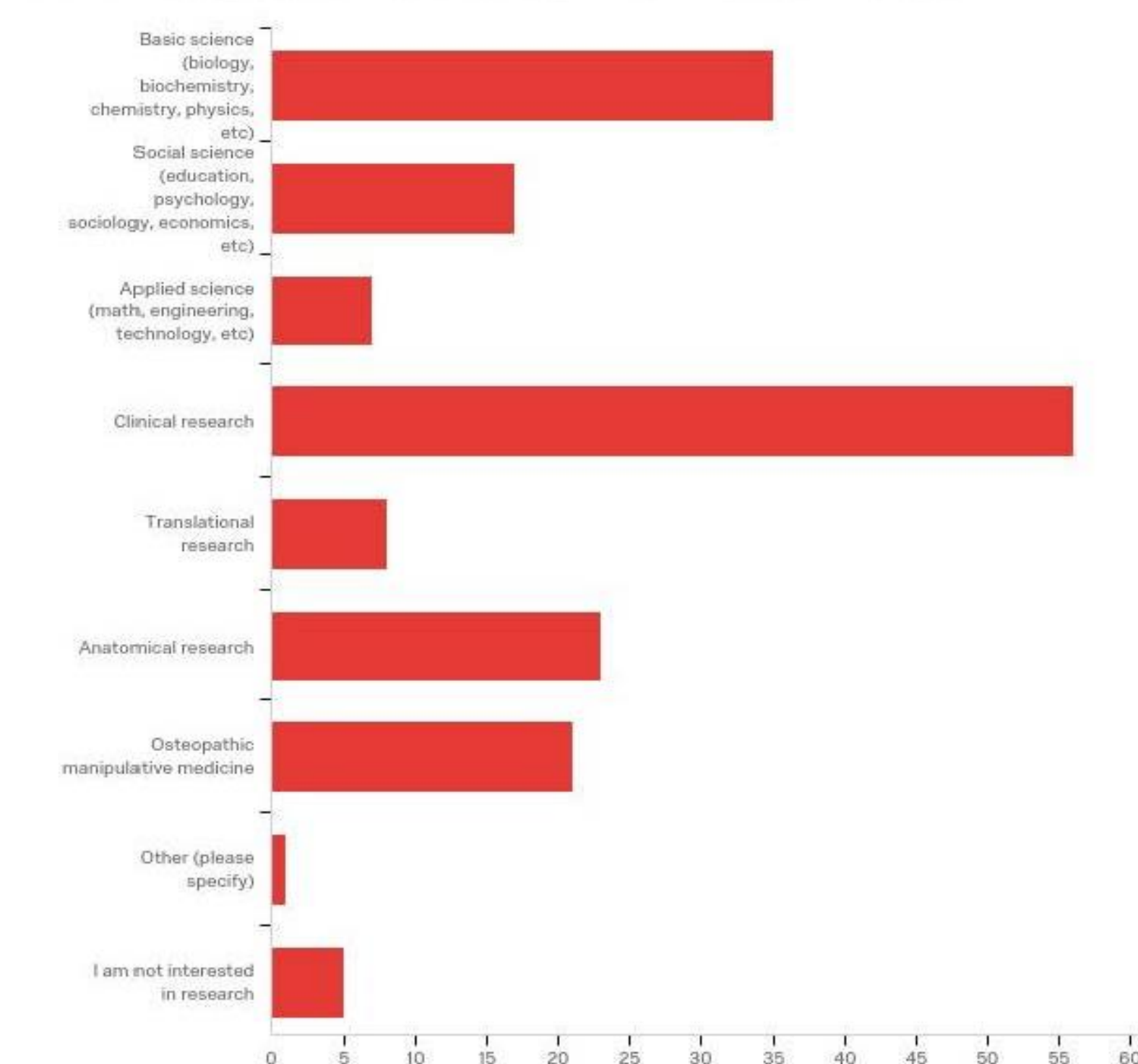
QID11 - Which of the following describes a reason why you might not participate in research during medical school? Please select all that apply.



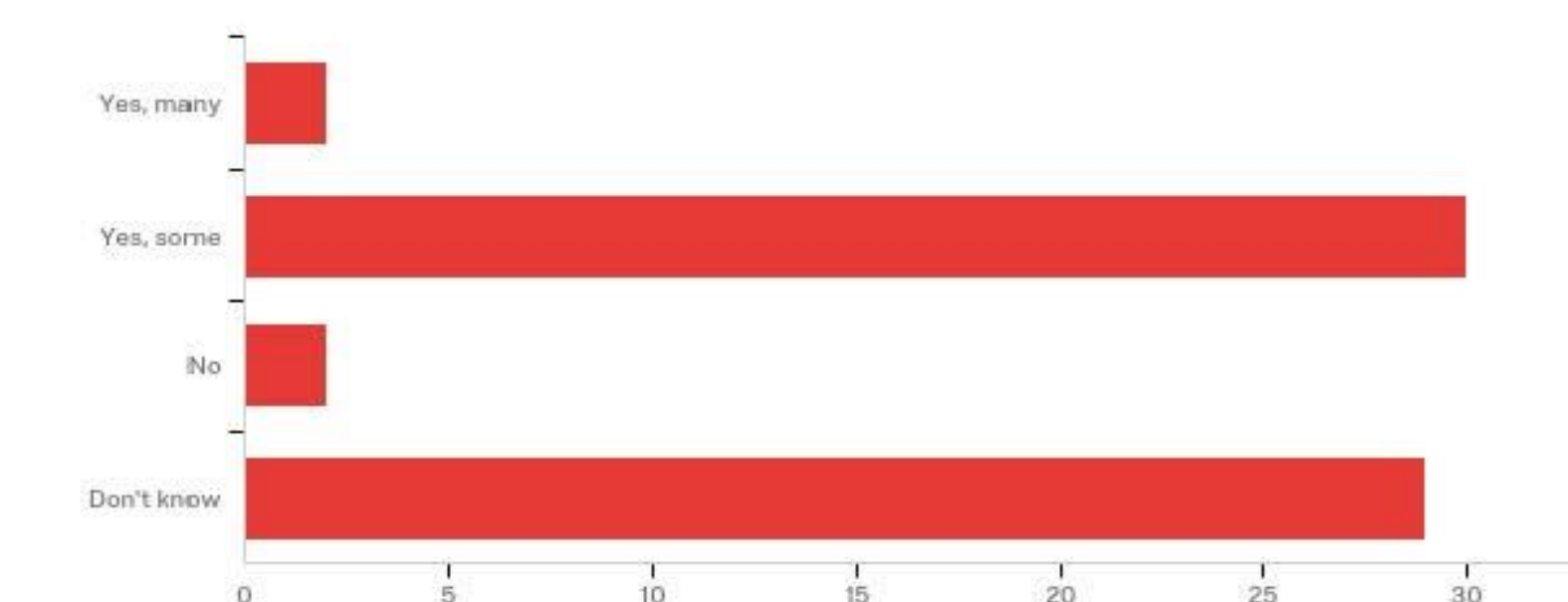
QID12 - Which of the following might encourage you to participate in research during medical school? Please select all that apply.



QID14 - What type of research interests you? Please select all that apply.



Q15 - In your opinion, do research opportunities exist at [QID1-ChoiceGroup-SelectedChoices] in your area of interest?



Conclusions

- Large discrepancy between the percentage of MU-COM students who rate research as having importance during medical school and the percentage who are interested in performing research or are already doing research in medical school
- Likely due to perceived barriers such as the perception of doing poorly on coursework, as well as lack of awareness of research opportunities in particular fields of interest, and lack of incentives to perform research
- Efficient strategies to help balance the rigors of studying for medical coursework and performing research could be provided to students by a combination of faculty, education specialists, and academic and mental health counselors
- Deficit in awareness of research opportunities can be addressed by strengthening communication between faculty and students
- May be achieved in a number of ways: well-publicized webpage or database conveying faculty research projects (including availability to take students and contact information), individual advertisement by faculty member, and enhancement of the research environment at the school
- Incentives may include recognition of successful research completion on diploma, or using school funds to provide monetary reimbursement for research opportunities at the school