

# Exploring causes, consequences, and management of conflicts among healthcare professionals

Naïke Bochatay<sup>1</sup>, Virginie Muller-Juge<sup>1</sup>, Stéphane Cullati<sup>1,2</sup>, Katherine S. Blondon<sup>2</sup>, Noëlle Junod Perron<sup>1,2</sup>, Nadia M. Bajwa<sup>1,2</sup>, Fabienne Maître<sup>2</sup>, Pierre Chopard<sup>2</sup>, Nu V. Vu<sup>1</sup>, Sara Kim<sup>3</sup>, Georges L. Savoldelli<sup>1,2</sup>, Patricia Hudelson<sup>2</sup>, Mathieu R. Nendaz<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Geneva, Faculty of Medicine, Switzerland, <sup>2</sup> Geneva University Hospitals, Switzerland, <sup>3</sup> University of Washington, School of Medicine, United States

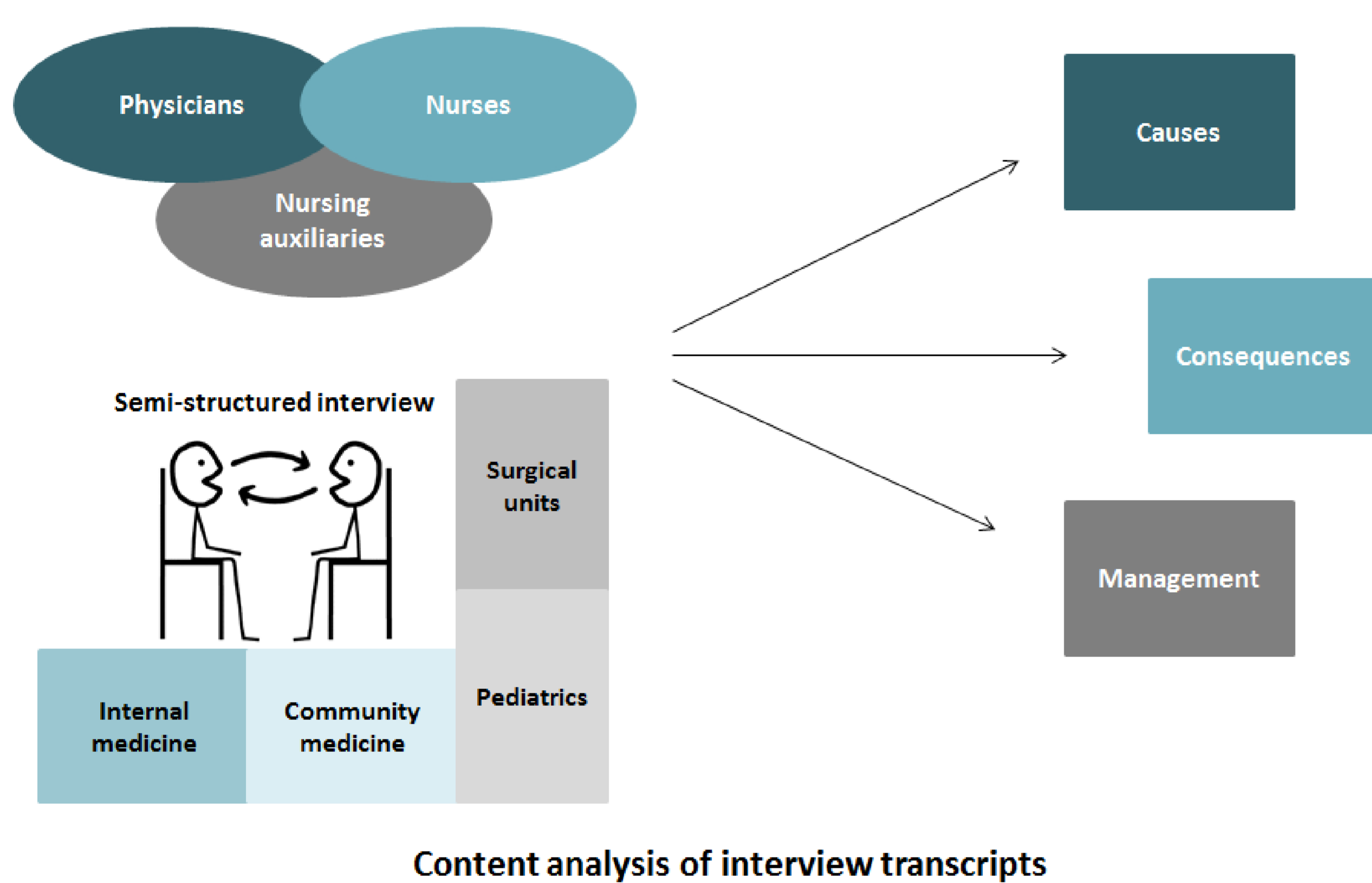
## 1. OBJECTIVE

Conflicts between healthcare professionals can affect individuals, teams, the working environment, and patient care.

We sought to:

- Explore **causes of conflict** among healthcare professionals, and to analyze **how professionals were affected by and responded to conflict**
- Describe the **difference between intra- and interprofessional conflict**

## 2. METHODS



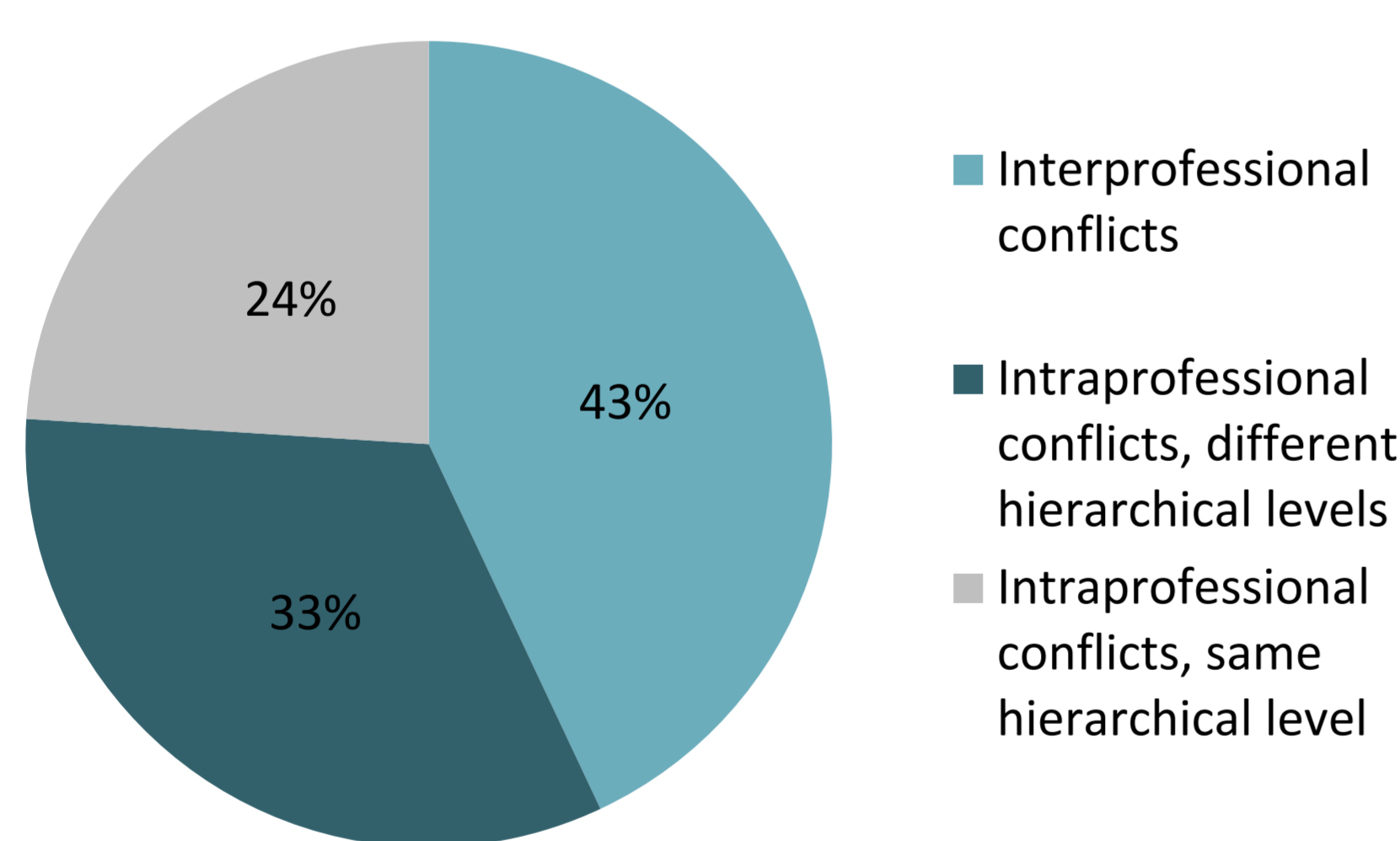
## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1 Participant Characteristics

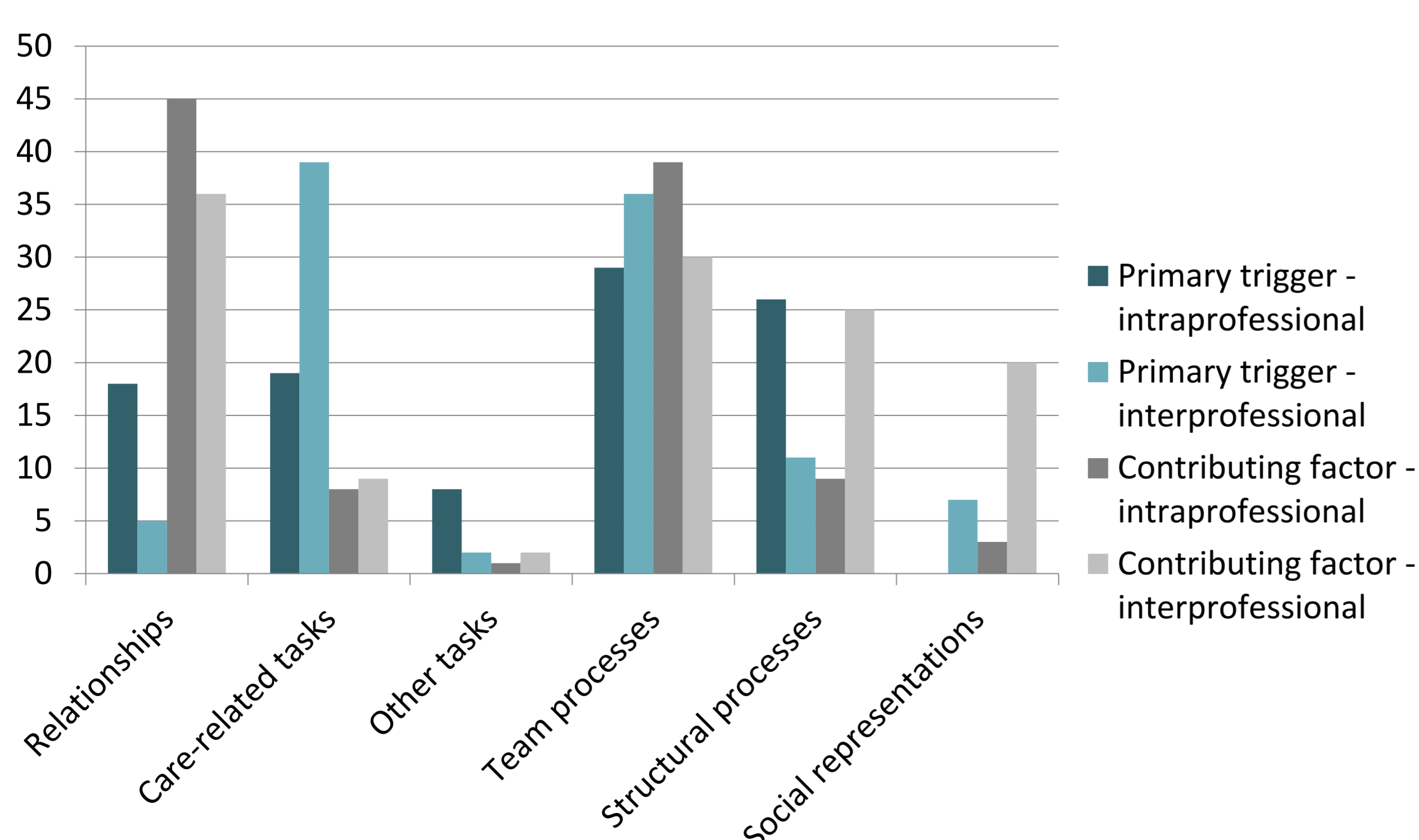
**82 participants:**

21 chief residents, 22 residents, 6 nurse managers, 27 nurses, 6 nursing auxiliaries

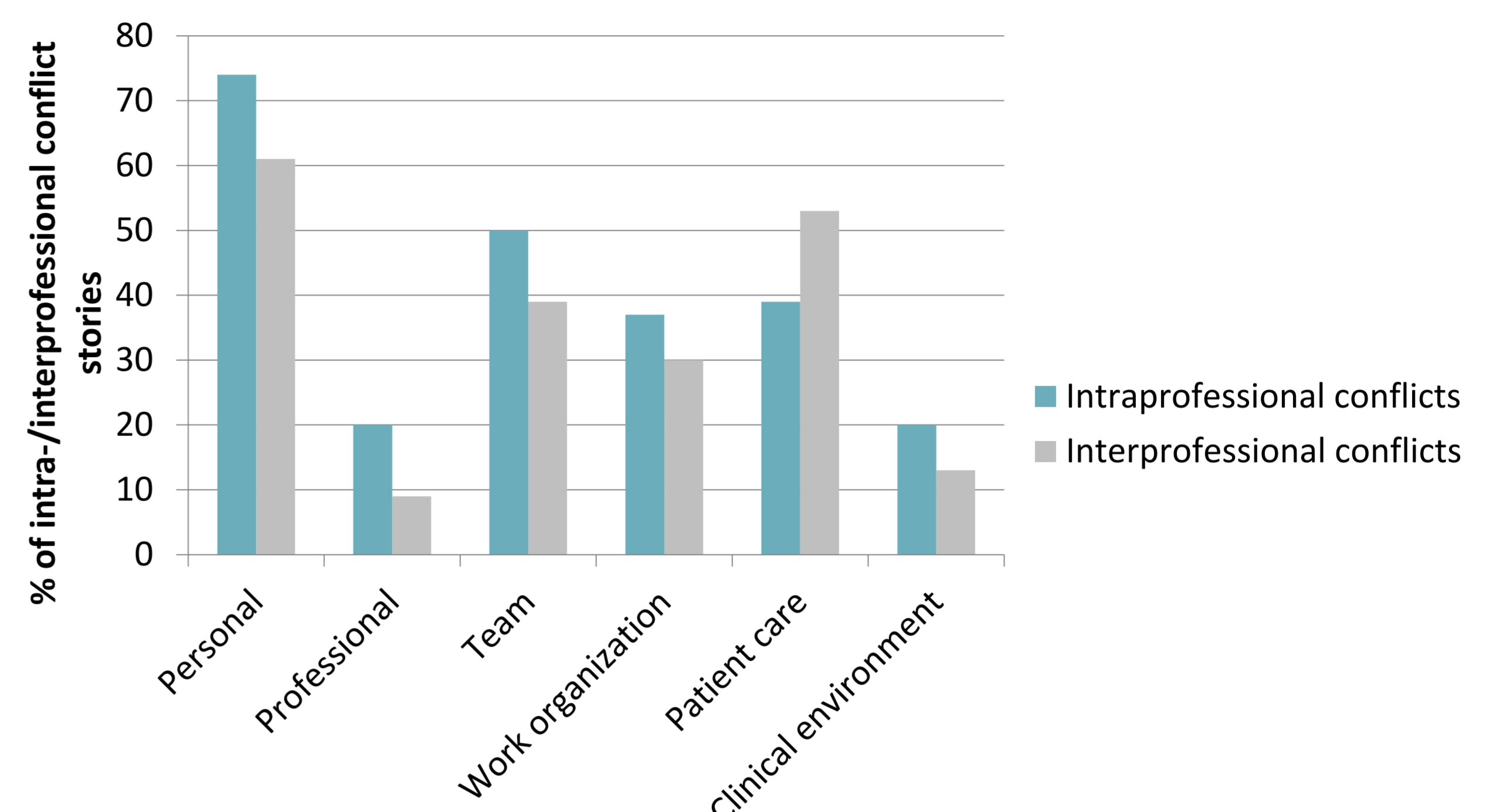
**Conflict stories:** 130 stories collected



### 3.2 Conflict triggers and contributing factors



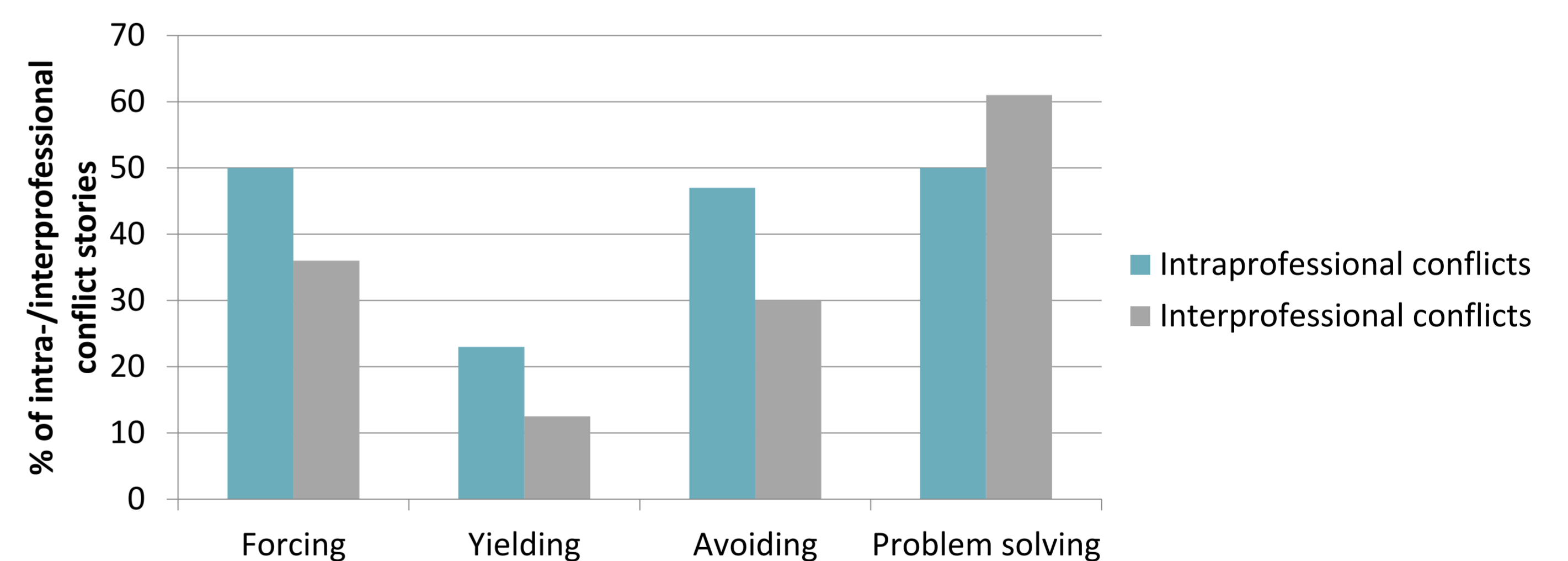
### 3.3 Conflict consequences



- **Personal consequences (68%)**: anger, fear, shame, doubt  
*I started eating junk; I couldn't sleep at night, etc. I felt harassed, even though I wouldn't have been able to use this word at the time. (Nurse, community medicine)*
- **Professional consequences (15%)**: changing working place, changing specialty, being dismissed, receiving poor evaluations
- **Interpersonal consequences (45%)**: lower collaboration, poor relationships
- **Organizational consequences (34%)**: changes in the work structure
- **Consequences on patient care (45%)**: delays, inefficiency, patients aware of conflicts
- **Consequences on clinical environment (17%)**: potential errors and mishaps

*Which came first, the chicken or the egg? The question is, did the conflict arise because patient care was suboptimal or did this resident not manage the case properly because he was stressed [because of working with the attending physician]? (Chief resident, pediatrics)*

### 3.4 Conflict Management Strategies



## 4. DISCUSSION

- **Distinction** between **conflict triggers** and other **contributing factors**
- **Wide-ranging consequences** on healthcare professionals, their work and collaboration, and on patient care
- Potential **differences** between **intra- and interprofessional conflict**

## 5. TAKE-HOME MESSAGES

**Conflicts** between healthcare professionals are **complex**.

We need **acknowledge this complexity** in order to **improve collaboration** and to **better respond to conflict**.

### References

- De Wit, F. R. C., Greer, L. L., & Jehn, K. A. (2012). The paradox of intragroup conflict. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 97, 360–390.
- Greer, L. L., Saygi, O., Aaldering, H., & de Dreu, C. K. W. (2012). Conflict in medical teams: opportunity or danger? *Medical Education*, 46(10), 935–942.
- Hartog, C. S., & Benbenishty, J. (2014). Understanding nurse-physician conflicts in the ICU. *Intensive Care Medicine*, 41(2), 331–333.

