

Therapists and Oncologists perceptions on site-specific advanced practice roles for therapists in radiation oncology practice

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Purpose/Objective

Globally, advanced practice (AP) in radiotherapy was reported to meet service needs, the demands of professional development of the radiation therapists (RT) and as a retention strategy. The impact of AP has been widely published but the development in Singapore is still nascent. This study assessed the perception of the radiation oncologists (RO) and RT on site-specific advanced practice (SSAP) roles for RT and the potential of SSAP establishment in radiotherapy and the possible implication on current services.

Materials/methods

A cross-sectional survey design and purposive sampling method was adopted. All ROs and RTs working in the Division of Radiation Oncology, National Cancer Centre Singapore (DRO, NCCS), were invited to participate in the study. A mixed-method semi-structured questionnaire was adopted to collect both quantitative and qualitative data on the following issues; driving forces, restraints and implication upon successful establishment of SSAP.

The quantitative component of the questionnaire included nominal and Likert scale questions to elicit the respondents' views on several statements. The qualitative component was the open-ended questions which were also included to the second part of the quantitative questions to elicit the rationale behind the option choice of the respondents, which would provide an in-depth understanding and insight to the respondents' perception.

Results

88 RO and RT were approached and the response rates were 65% and 94% respectively. The major findings included the RO's strong support for SSAP development, the RT's requisition for fair opportunities for role development and clear role delineation to minimise overlapping of roles and to avoid medico-legal issues.

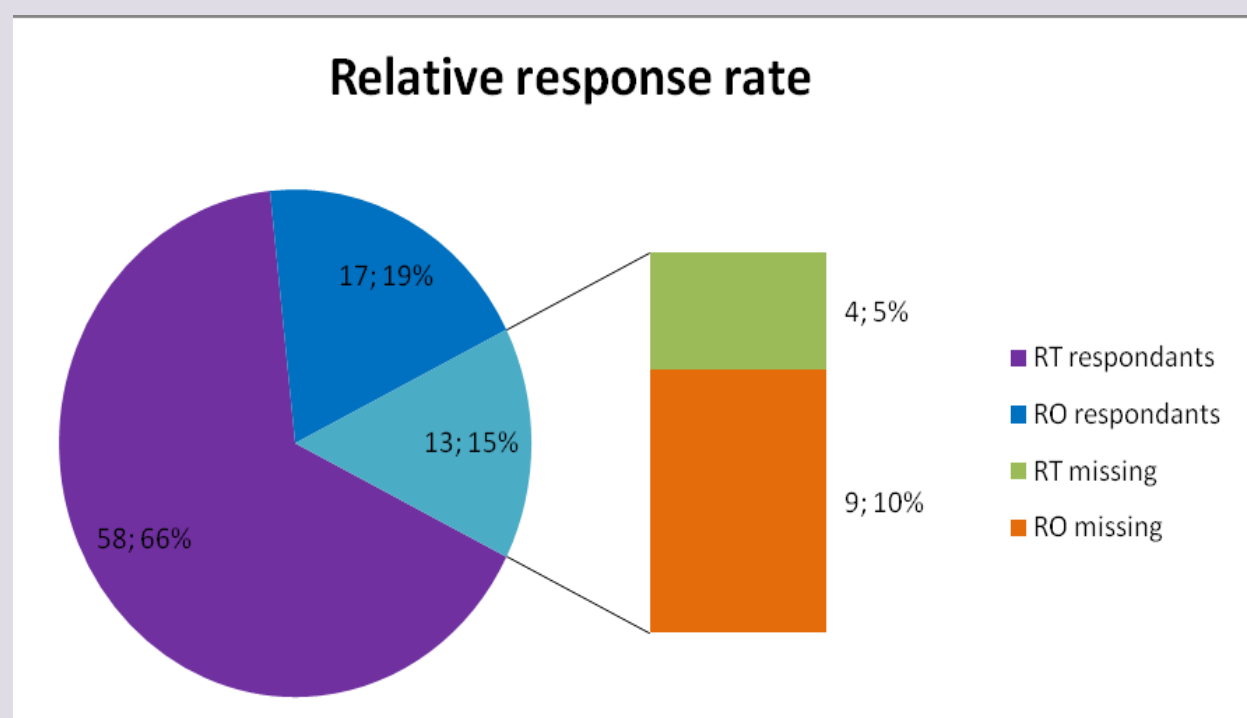


Figure 1: Percentages of ROs and RTs respondents in the survey.

Quantitative components

There were no significant difference ($p>0.05$) in the results of the perceptions of the RO and RT in three out of the five questions. This signified that the perceptions between the ROs and RT were aligned in agreeing that SSAP would improve RT's professional standards, had advantages in DRO and had management support of SSAP development.

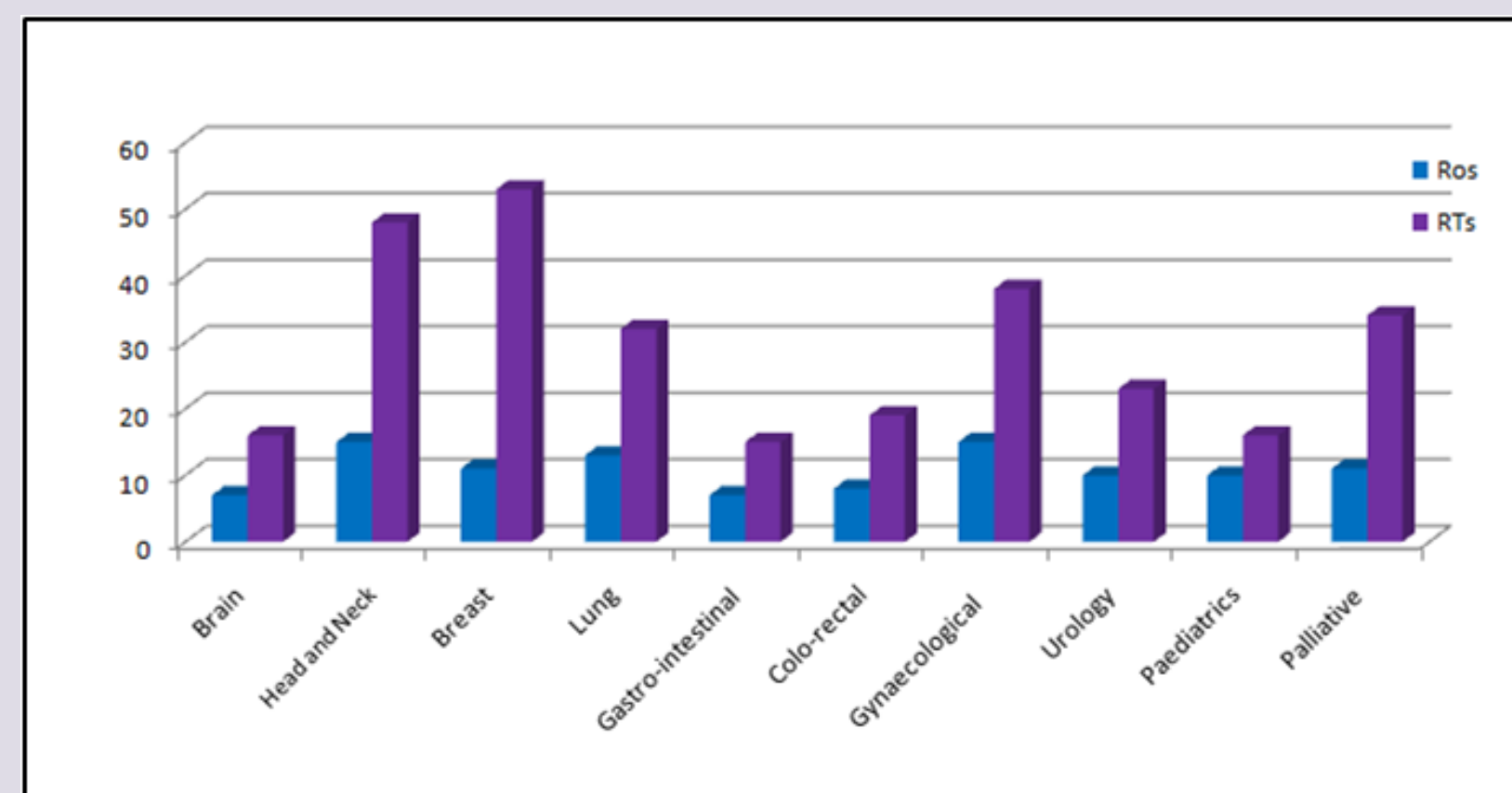


Figure 2: Clinical sites that would benefit from Advanced practice.

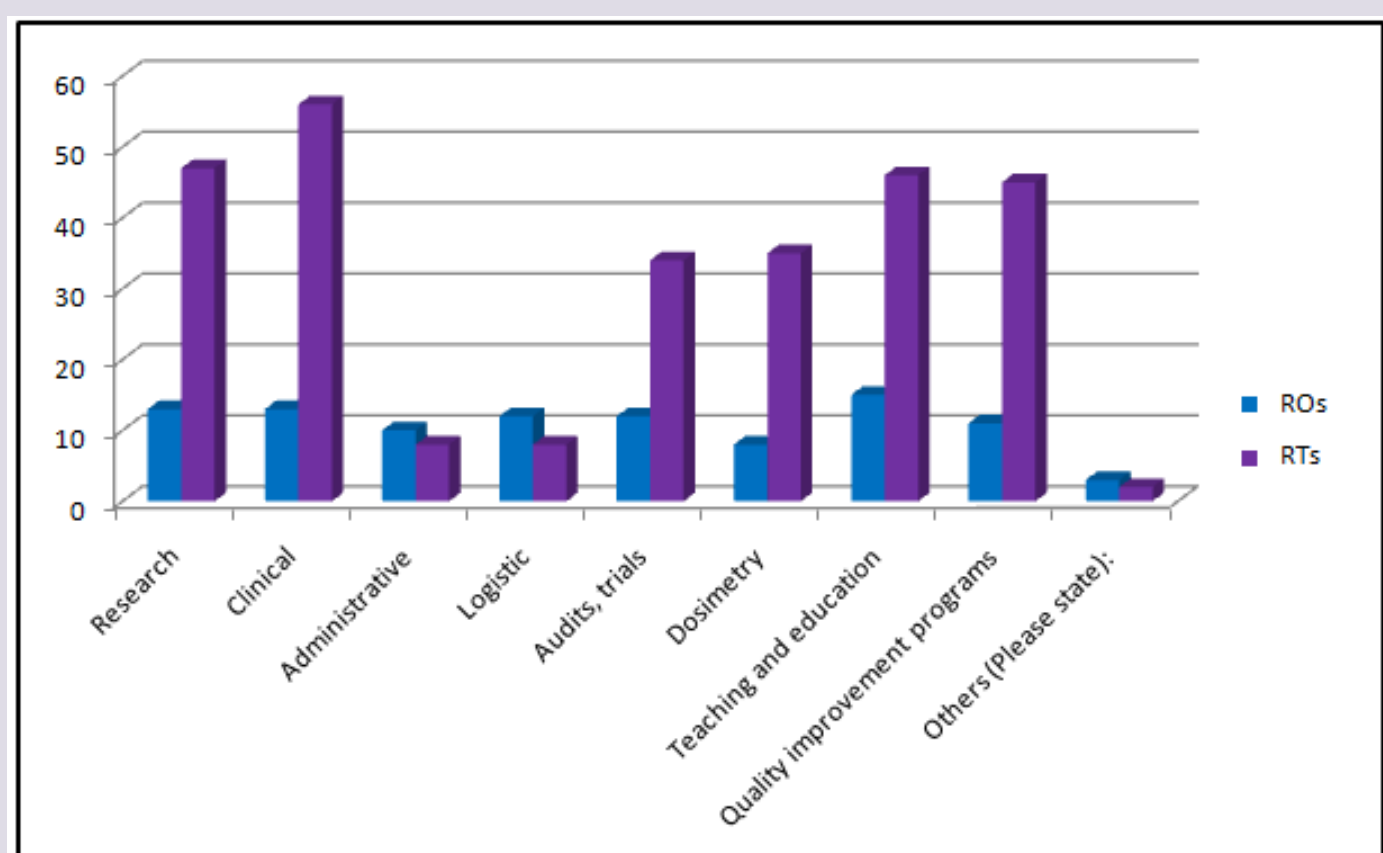


Figure 3: Roles and responsibilities of APRTs.

Results

On the other hand, the other two questions revealed significant difference ($p<0.05$) between the two groups of respondents on the impact of AP on continuing professional development and life-long learning and RT's support of AP development. However, it could be noted that the results was due to the deviation in the response of 'strongly agree' and 'agree'.

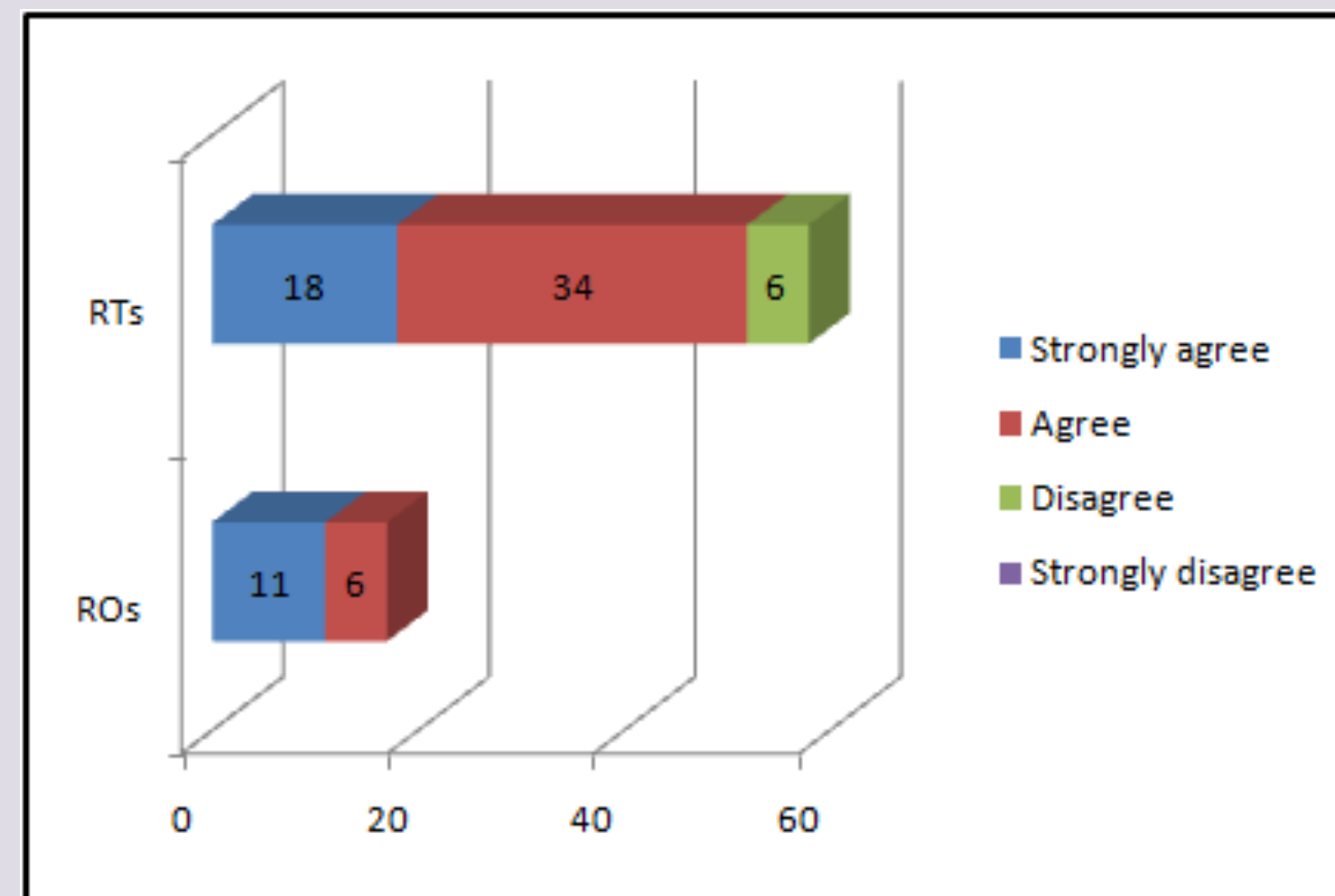


Figure 4: Illustrates the perception of the impact of advanced practice on continuing professional development and life-long learning.

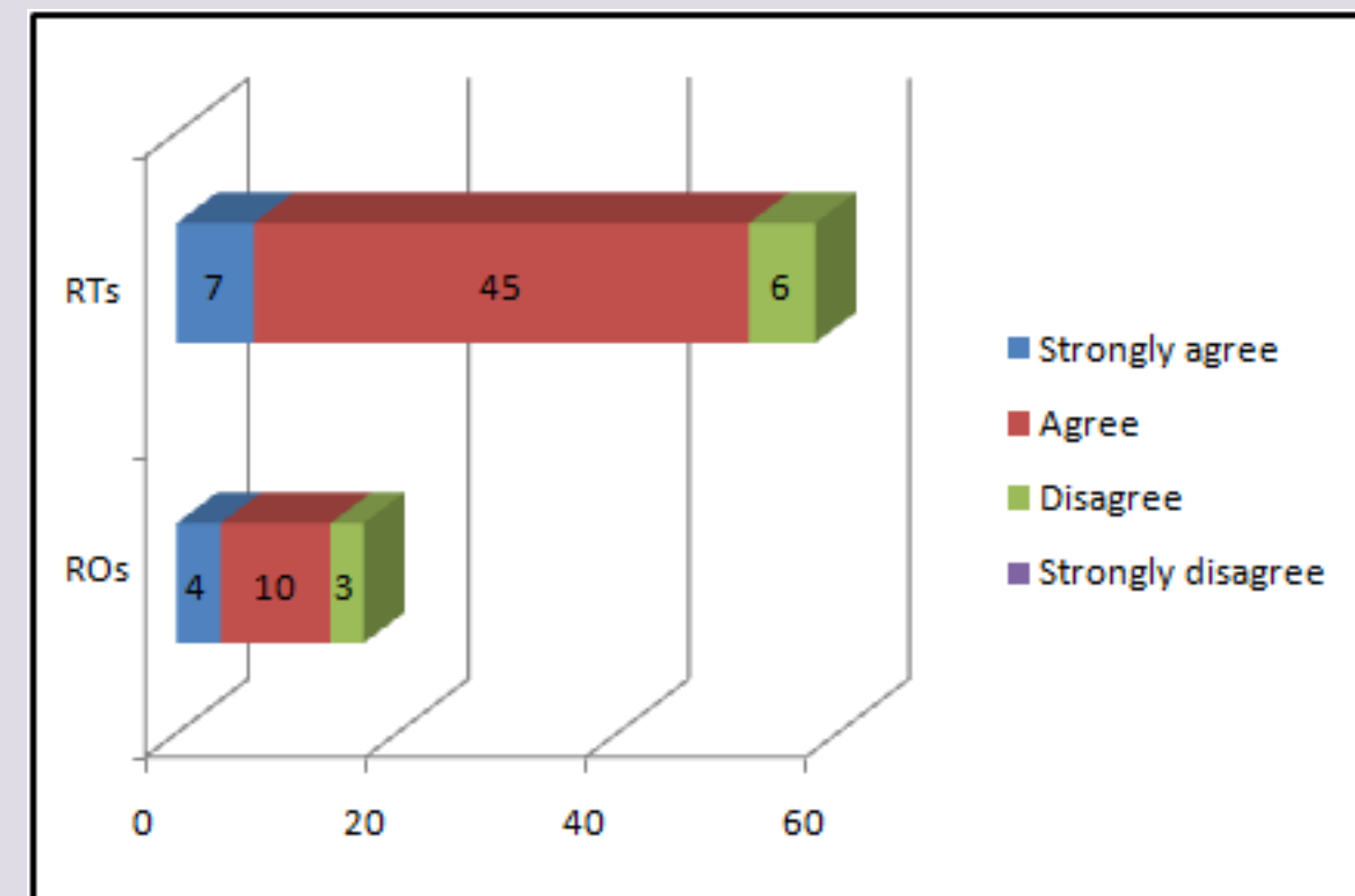


Figure 5: Illustrates the perception of the Radiation therapists' support of advance practice development.

Qualitative components (broad themes)

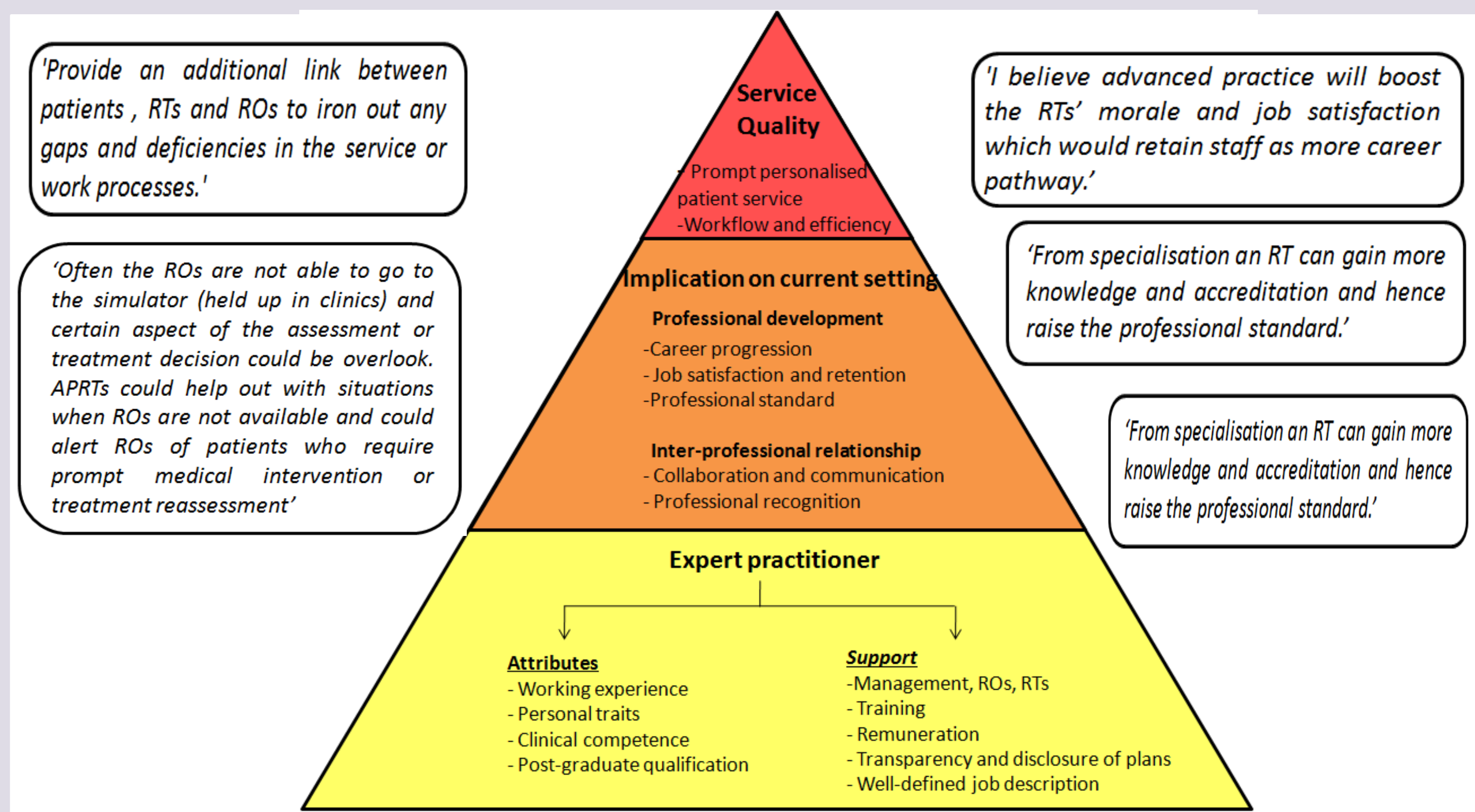


Figure 6: Summary of the perception of SSAP, the criteria and possible implications.

Conclusions

There was strong support for SSAP with potential benefits in RT's career advancement, job satisfaction, recruitment and retention. Inter-professional relationship would improve with greater communication and collaboration to provide a holistic treatment pathway. Service quality and patient satisfaction would also be enhanced with the prompt personalised service envisaged.

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