

# General Practitioners (GPs) help our young people stay mentally healthy

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# Young people are important!

- 18.5 % of population are aged between 12 and 24
- 24% have depression
- 22% are overweight
- 25% + smoke
- Increasing chlamydia
- Reference:- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. "Australia's Health 2004." 186 – 190

# Ill health in adolescence!

- Psychosocial factors
- 50% of ill health in adolescence is due to emotional, behavioural and learning problems
- Risk taking behaviours
- Lack of knowledge and lack of skills in accessing primary health care

# Objectives

- Do visits to high schools by GPs (with GP registrars and Yr. 4 med. students) help young people to access General Practice for mental health issues?
- Does the age of the visiting doctor assist with communication between young people and the doctor?

# Method

- GPs, GP registrars and 4th year medical students trained in adolescent health issues
- Trained in consulting with adolescents
- Also trained in facilitating small groups of high school students in discussions on health issues.

- Questionnaires distributed to year 11 students in 3 schools.(approx. 600 students)
- Visits to these schools by the previously trained GPs, GP registrars and year 4 medical students as part of the compulsory year 11 PDHPE program
- GPs facilitated small group discussions.

- Questionnaires distributed to all year 11 students in 2 control schools who do not receive the GP visits
- 6 months later, questionnaires distributed to the same students both at the intervention schools and the control schools.
- Answers collated and differences between the intervention and the control schools analysed by analysis of variants using “Minitab” Version 13.31

# Principal findings

- Valuable networks created
- Positive students' feedback
- Age range:-16-21; Male – 60%.
- Born in Australia - 54%; China - 14%; Korea-10%; Hong Kong – 6%
- 25% of students in control schools showed drop in emotional health rating between the initial and second questionnaire: no drop in emotional health rating in intervention schools

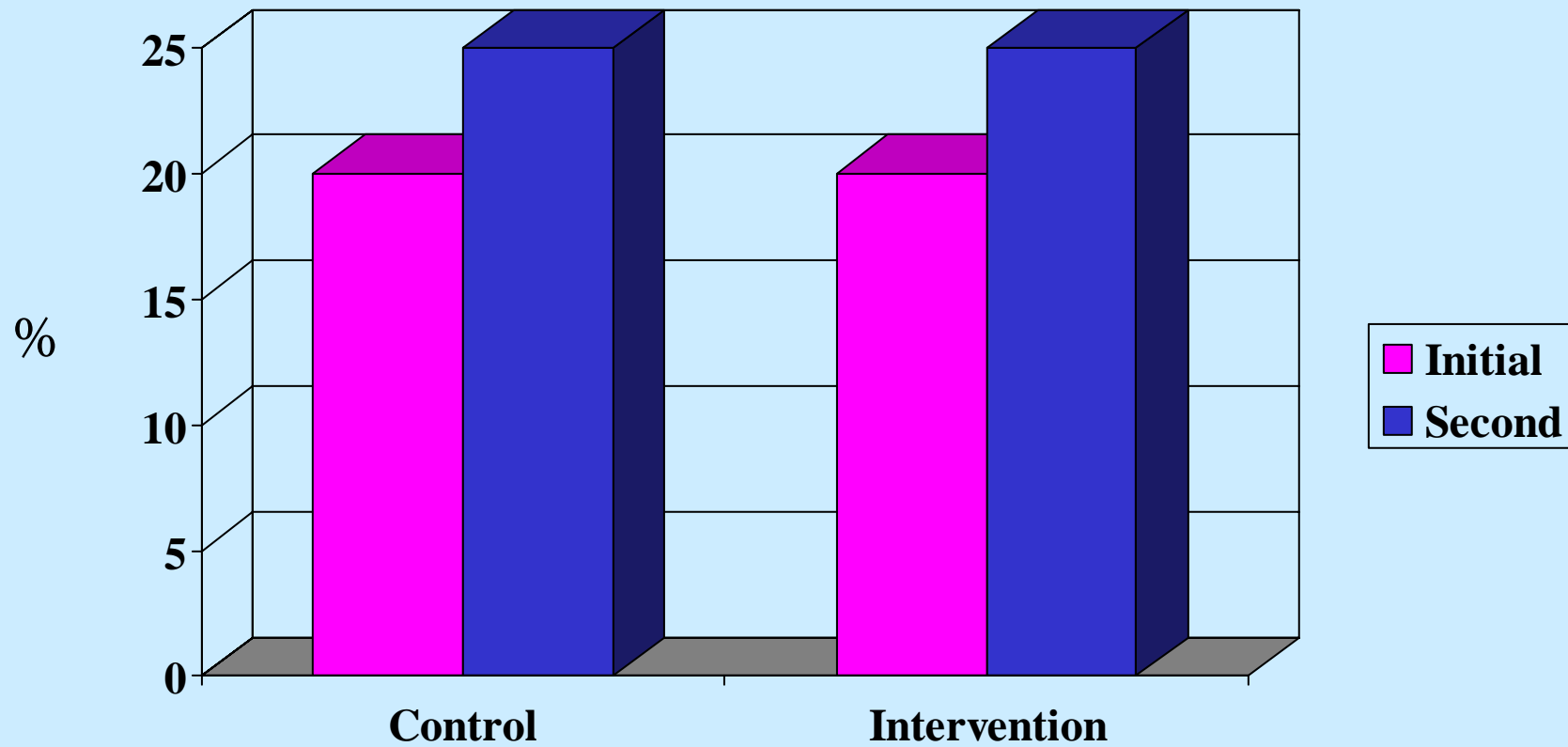
- 99% showed that their leader was an effective communicator
- Chi squared statistical analysis showed no significant difference between the group leaders' age and the adolescents' views on the effectiveness of their communication

“She made me realise  
that doctors aren’t scary  
and can really help you”

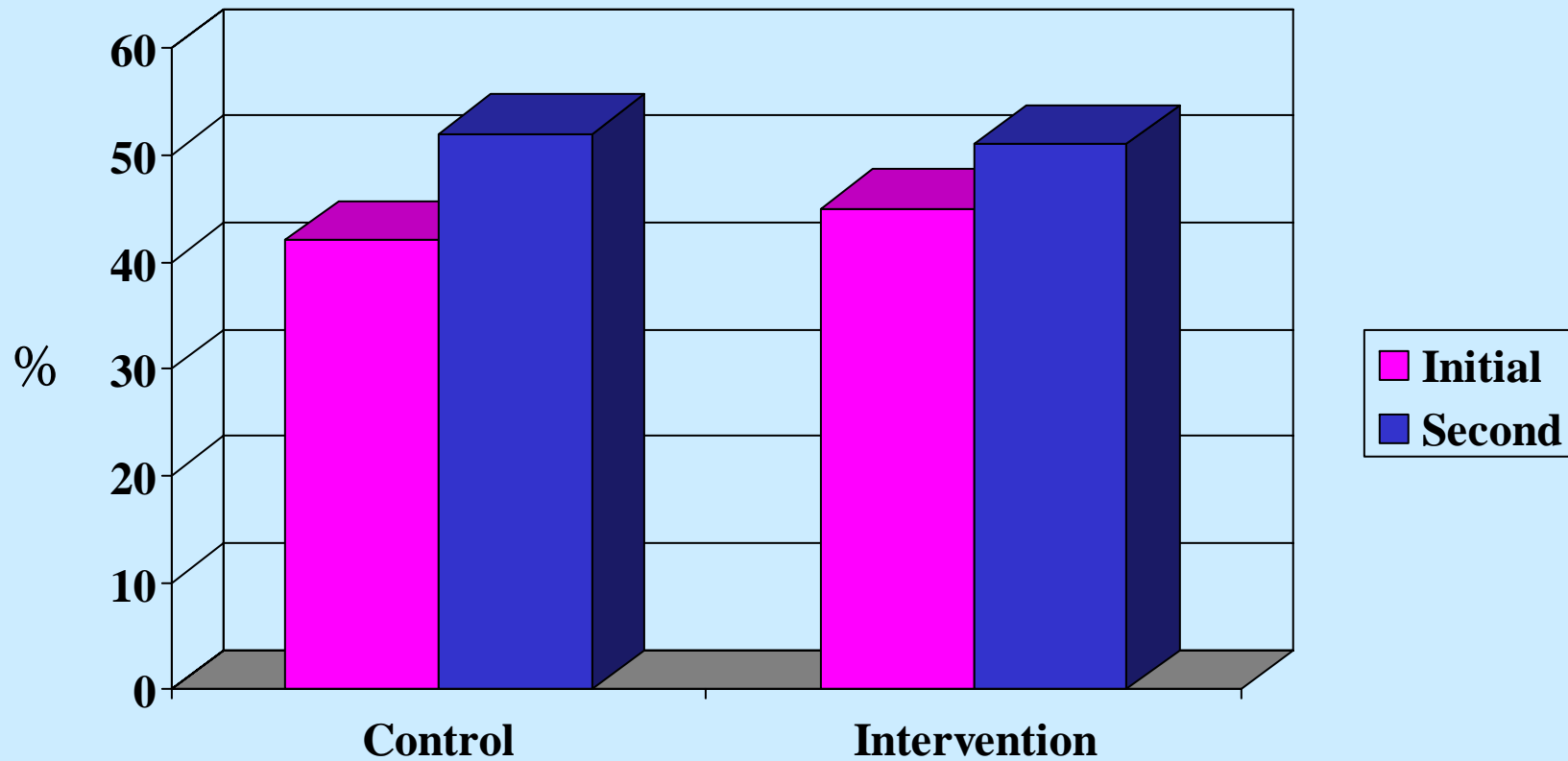
“They helped me open my  
eyes about going to the doctor  
by myself and not feeling  
embarrassed about it”

“I thank them  
for giving their  
time to help solve  
our problems”

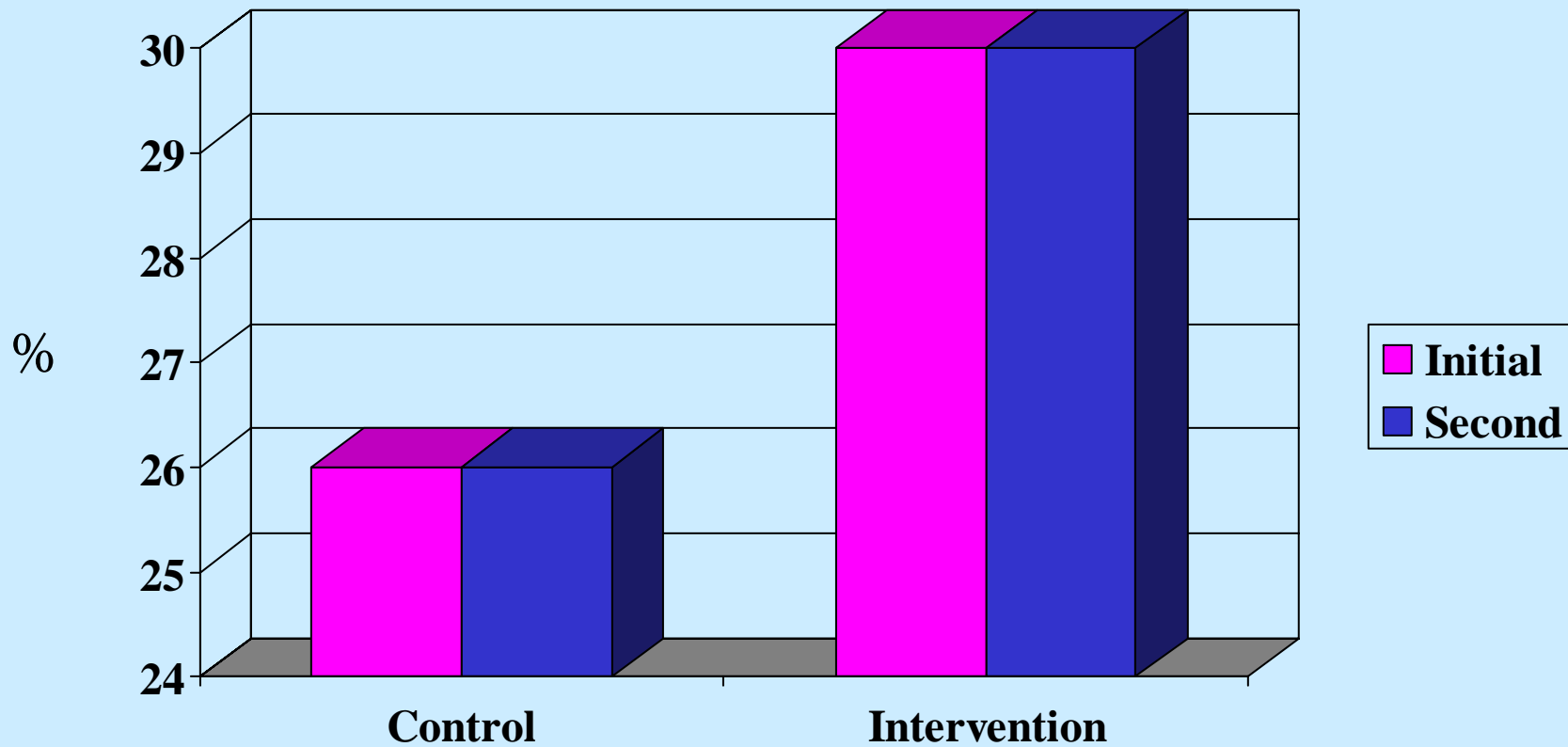
# Exam stress



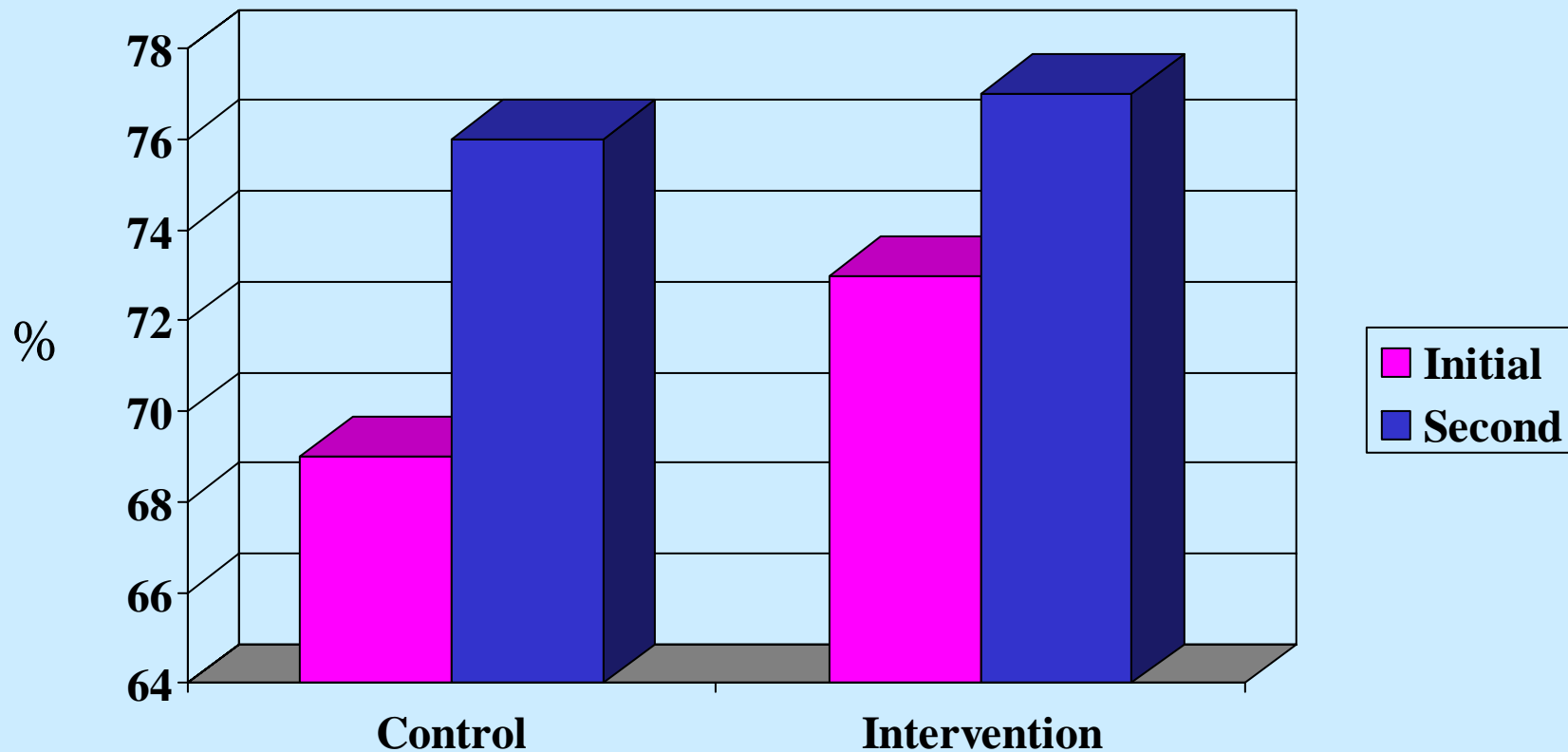
# Depression



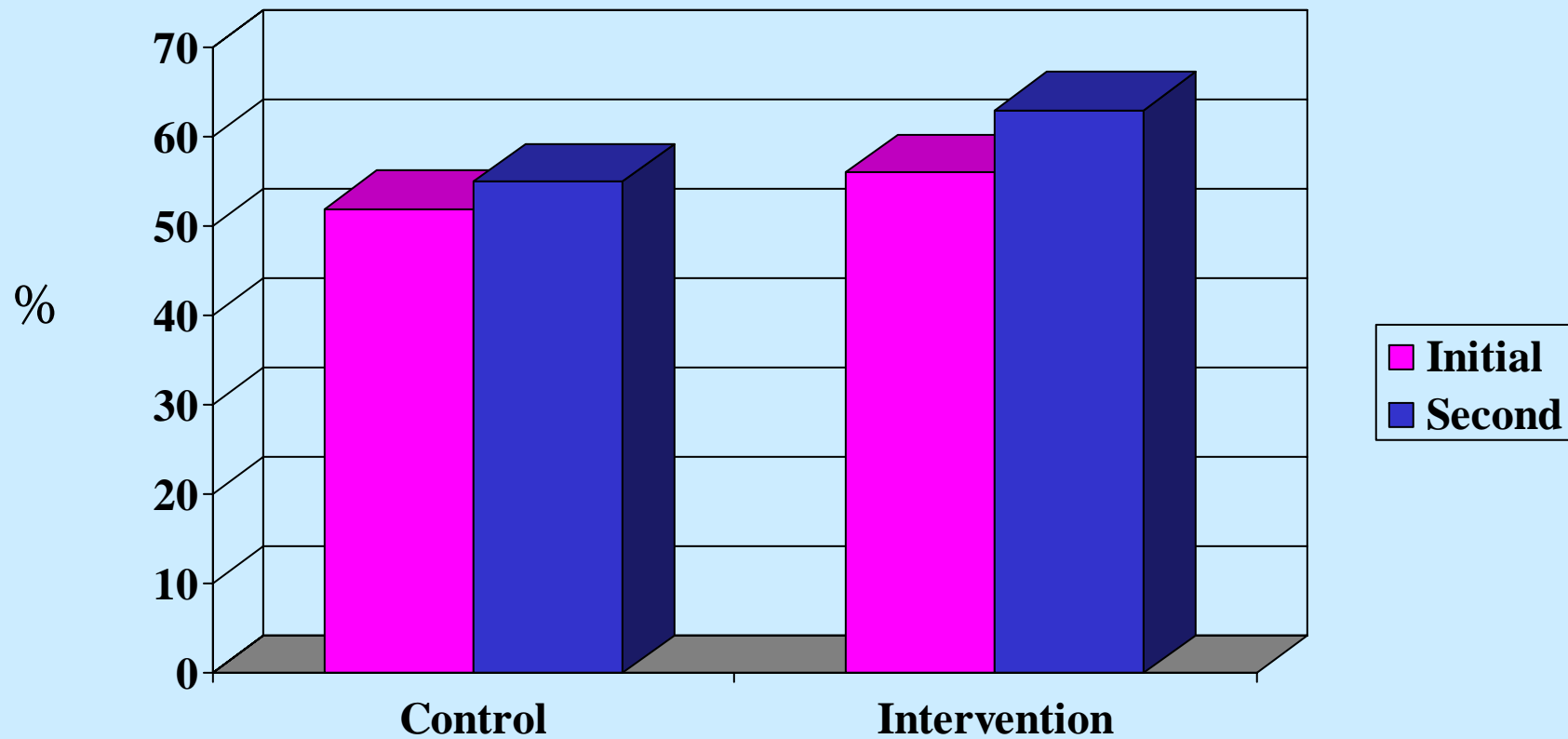
# Self Esteem



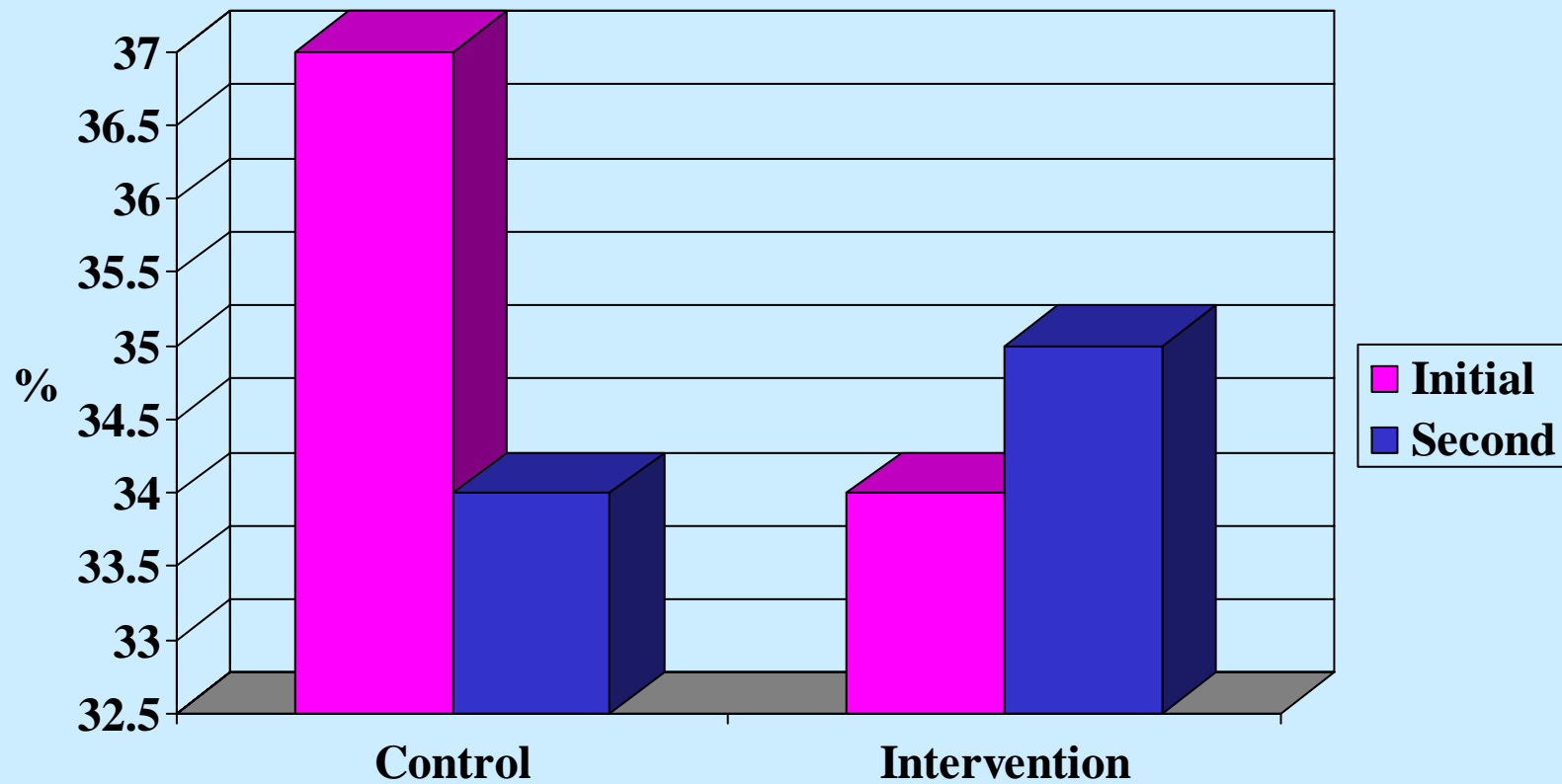
# GP available for emotional health problems



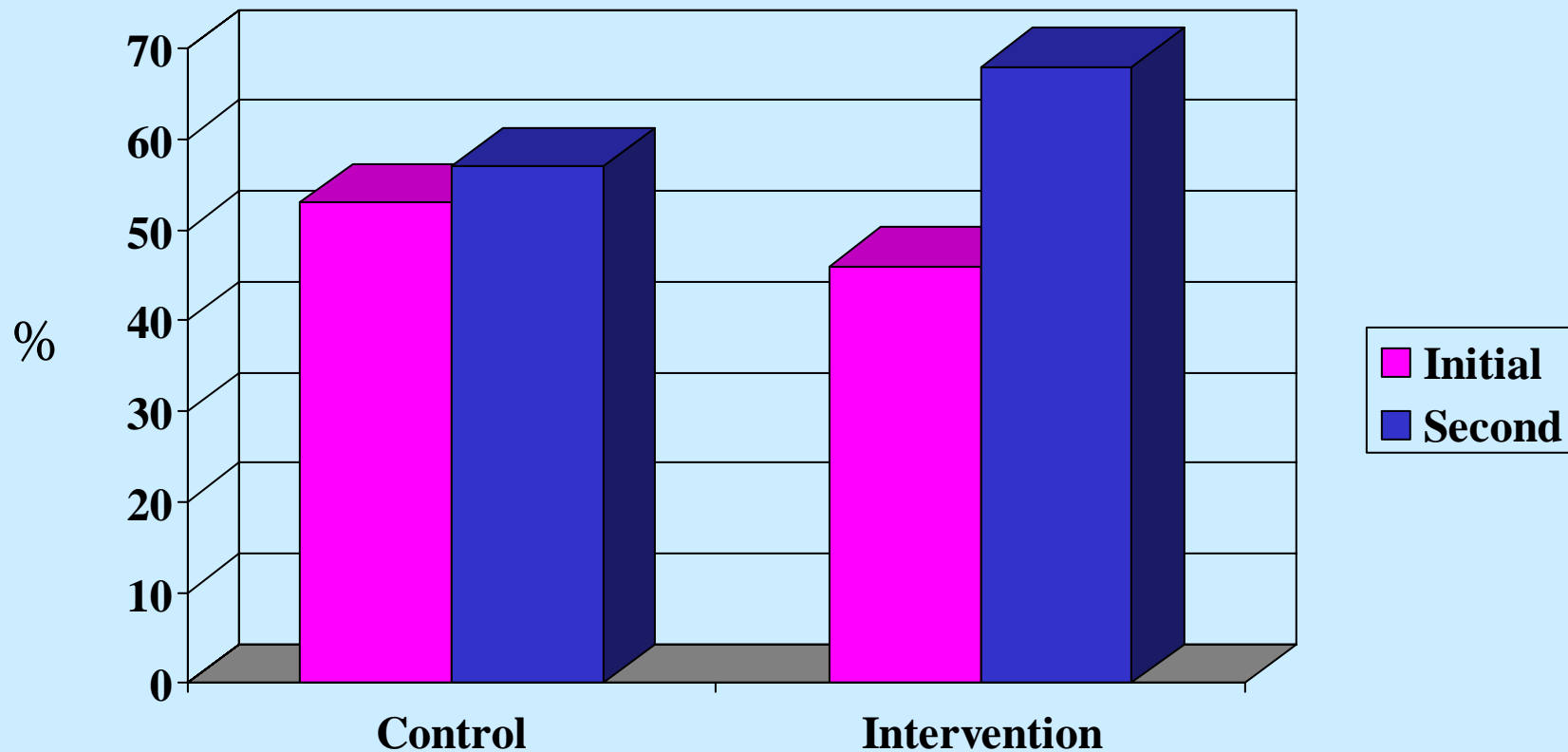
# Sexual Health Advice



# Alcohol



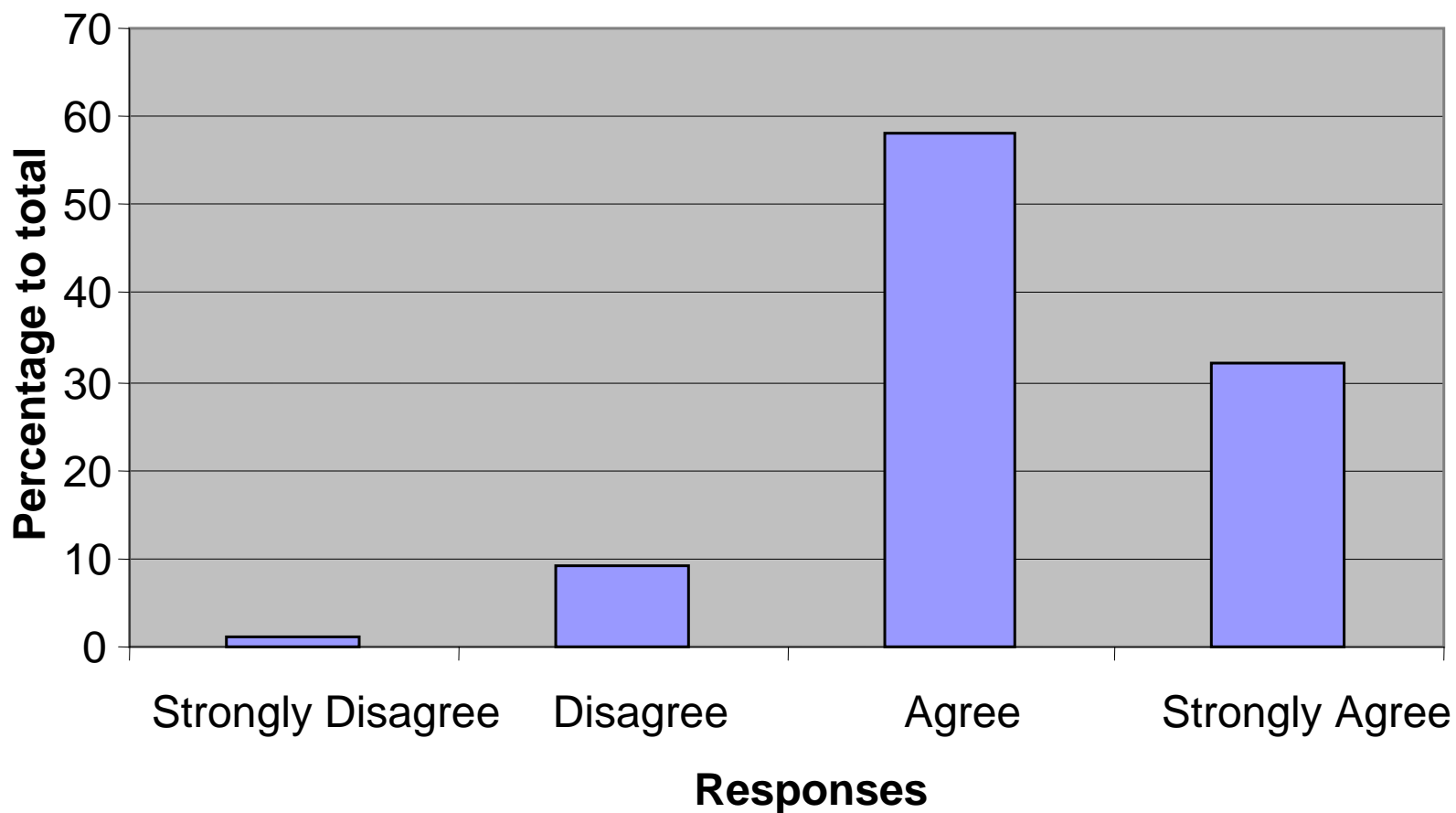
# Know that eligible to have own “Medicare” card



developed networks with staff and school counsellors, creating means of referral for young people

increased young people's knowledge of resources to assist them with solutions for mental health problems.

## You feel more comfortable discussing health problems with a family doctor after today



# Discussion

- Questionnaire – lessons learnt!
- Figures show trend for more young people to visit a GP for some emotional health problems and sexual health advice, following the GP visits.
- This trend also seen in control schools. Would a more focused simpler intervention by GPs serve the same role as the visits?
- Access to GPs improved by increased knowledge of “Medicare”

# Implications

- Young people's access to General Practice is improved by GPs visiting schools and facilitating small group discussions on General Practice and relevant health issues
- Further research and resources are needed to look at larger statistical samples and at best practice for GPs to work with young people through their schools.

Age of the doctor made no difference to the success of the communication, enabling registrars and medical students to supplement the personnel to run the program and, at the same time, have the opportunity to improve their own skills and knowledge of adolescent medicine.