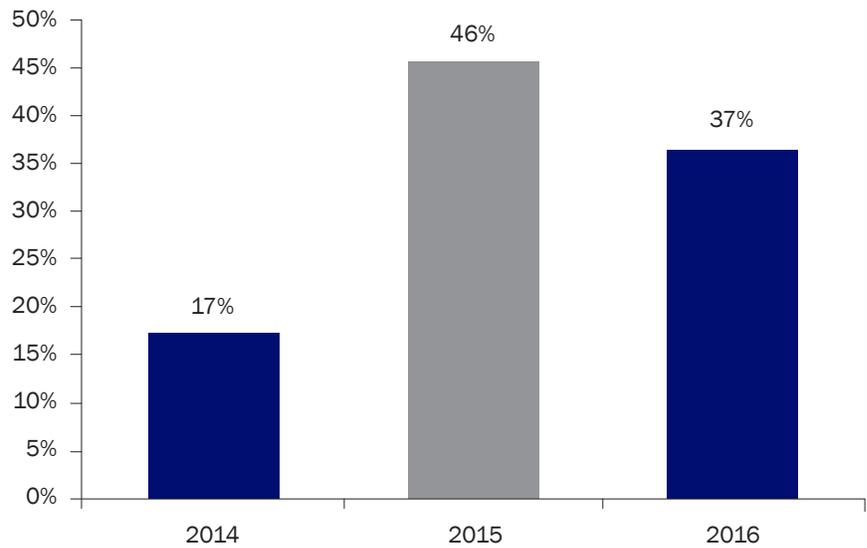


Overview

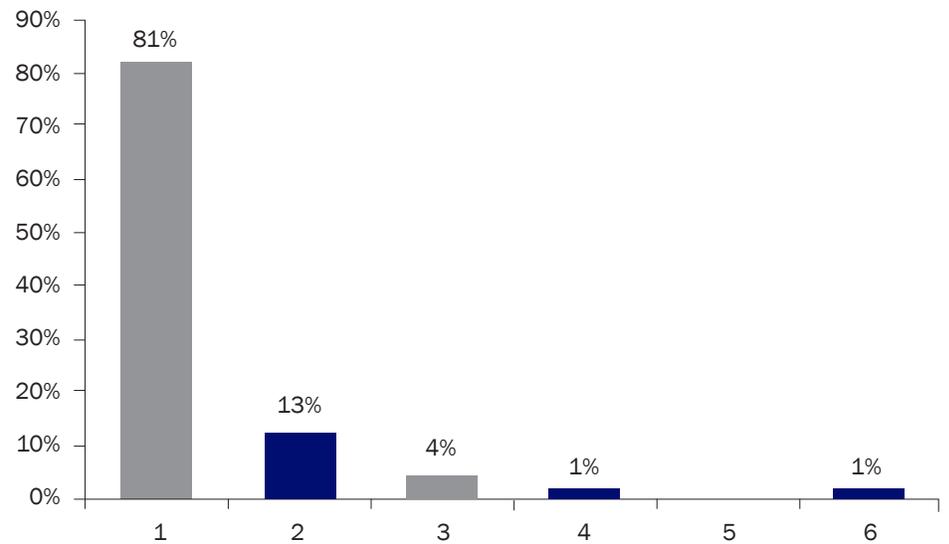
In 2016 the Hand Therapy Certification Commission conducted a follow up survey of therapists who passed the Hand Therapy Certification Examination in 2014, 2015 or 2016 to gather information about how successful candidates prepared for the examination, so that future candidates might benefit from their advice. Similar surveys were performed in 2007 and 2008. Email invitations were sent to 431 therapists and 135 completed the survey.

The Survey Questions and Answers

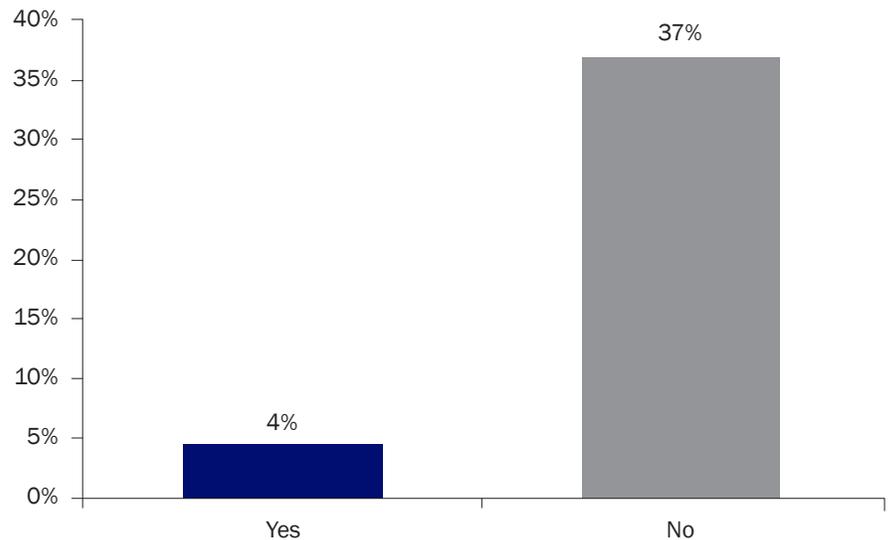
1. In what year did you pass the CHT Exam?



2. How many times did you take it before you passed?



3. If you took the test more than once, did you change the study methods you used in the year that you passed?



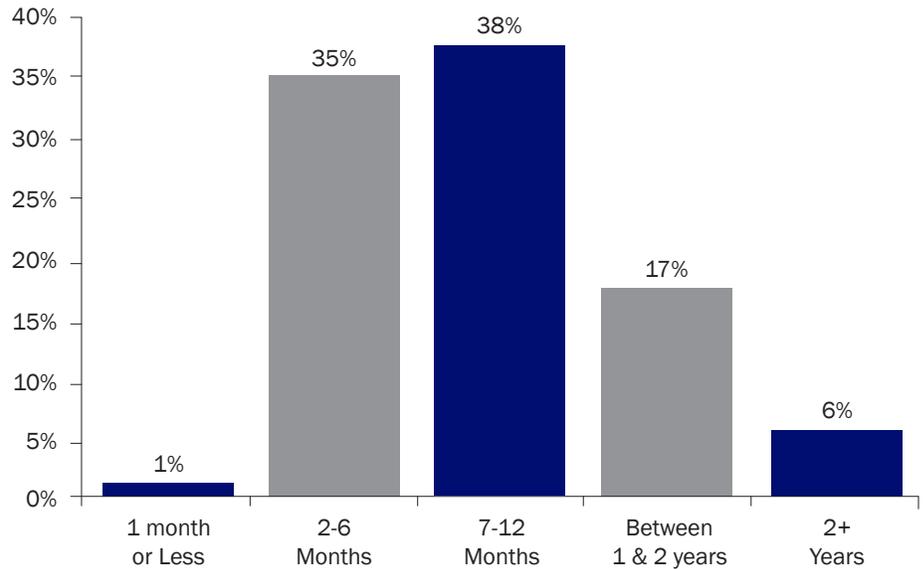
4. What did you do and how was it more effective?

Participated in study groups, found a study partner, attended ASHT's Hand Therapy Review Course¹, used practice exams², made and used flashcards, studied *Rehabilitation of the Hand*³ and *Hand Rehabilitation: A Quick Reference Guide and Review*⁴, ASHT's *Test Prep for the CHT Exam*⁵ were mentioned by many candidates as being more effective than their previous methods.

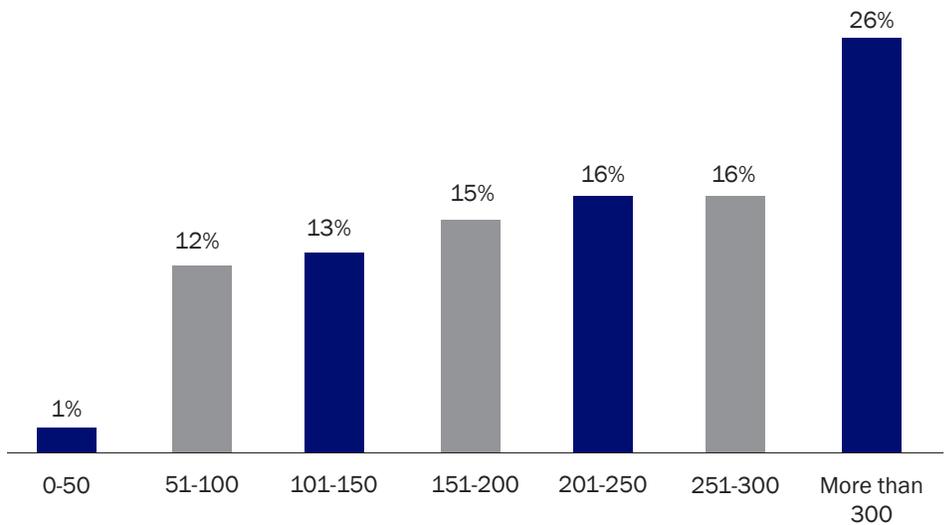
Other comments included:

- ▶ I wrote my own flash cards using a phone app so it was the first thing I looked at when I woke up, last thing before bed and during lunch break at work.
- ▶ I studied everything in more detail the second time, rather than taking a more broad approach the first time. I spent a lot of time writing out information, both on charts/lists, as well as on index cards that I used to drill myself on the information.
- ▶ I focused heavily on anatomy more so than other times I had taken the exam. Prior prep focused on answering questions similarly to the exam although that helped, knowing anatomy was more effective for me.
- ▶ I changed jobs to work for a hand surgeon to get more clinical experience.
- ▶ I focused more on practice tests to become more familiar with how to read questions and pace myself.
- ▶ Instead of group studying, I organized my studying myself.

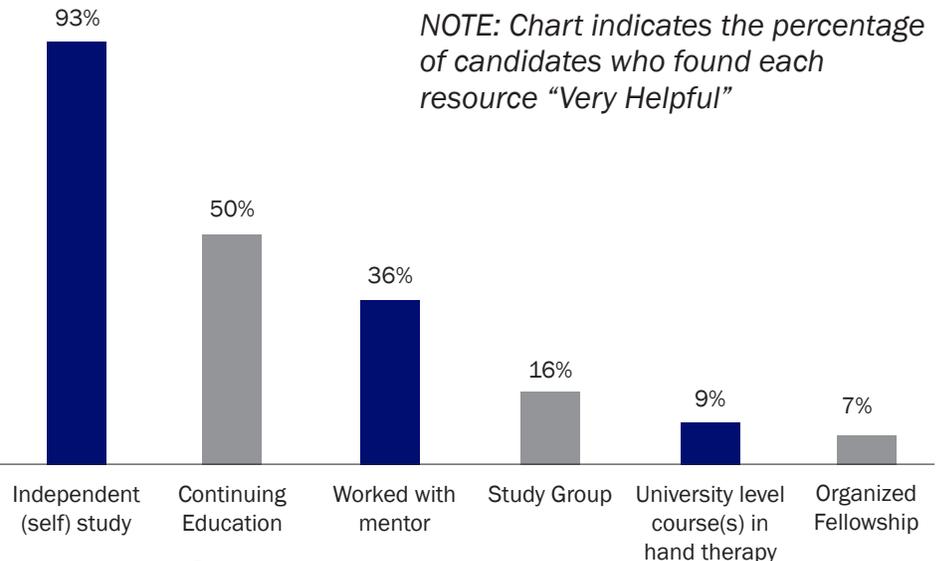
5. Approximately how long before the test did you start studying?



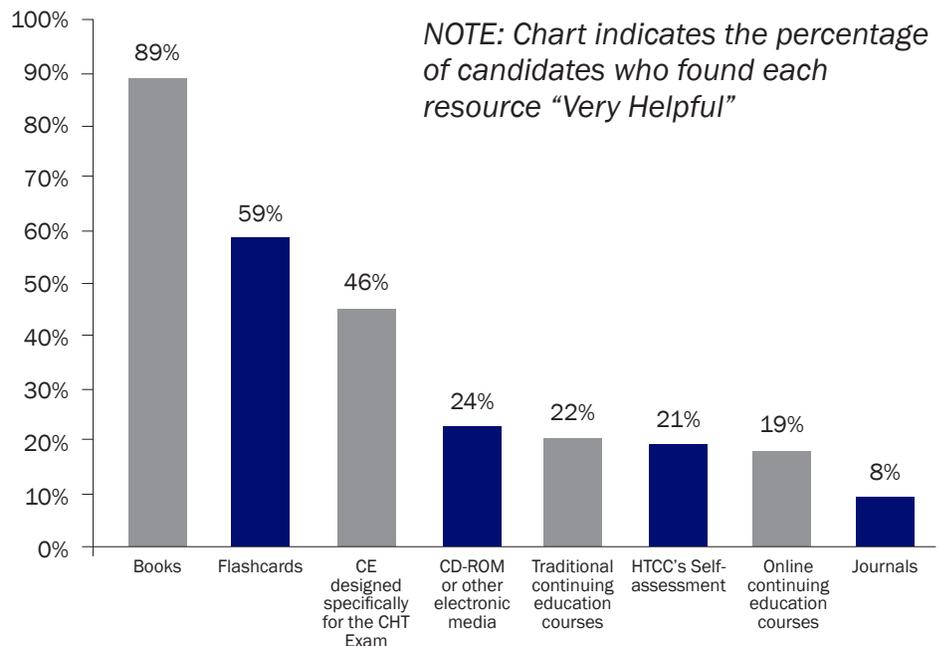
6. Approximately how many hours did you study in the year you passed?



7. Please indicate the method(s) you used to prepare for the exam in the year that you passed and rate its effectiveness.



8. Please indicate the resources(s) you used to prepare for the exam in the year that you passed and rate their effectiveness.



Comments on Resources Used

Books

Books were the highest rated study method and were used by 100% of the candidates. Top rated books include: *Rehabilitation of the Hand and Upper Extremity*; *Hand Rehabilitation: A Quick Reference Guide and Review* (also sometimes referred to as "The Purple Book"), *Hand Secrets*⁶, *ASHT's Test Prep for the CHT Exam*; physical agent modality books, and anatomy books.

Flashcards

Over 80% of the candidates used flashcards in their study. Although there are commercial sources for flash cards, therapists noted the value in them was related to writing them out and reviewing them at every opportunity. Some comments were:

- ▶ I created notes while reading the materials described above and then created flashcards from the notes
- ▶ Great way to learn anatomy
- ▶ I used the flashcards on the Mentoring Section of the HTCC website in conjunction with the mobile app "Flash Card Deluxe"⁷
- ▶ I used self-made flashcards while outlining *Rehabilitation of the Hand*
- ▶ I used the "Quizlet App"⁸ and looked up other people's flashcard sets which matched the subject matter. I also used my anatomy flashcards from college.
- ▶ Flashcards written by myself as I read and studied.
- ▶ The Netter Anatomy Flashcards⁹
- ▶ I reviewed flashcards as I walked in the park, used the treadmill, when stuck in traffic, when waiting for an appointment, when taking a coffee break, over lunch etc. For me, this was one of the most helpful tasks.

Prep Courses:

The most frequently mentioned preparation course was: ASHT's *Hand Therapy Review course*. This course was rated very helpful.

Case Review or Self-Assessment

Although a little more than half the candidates reported using HTCC's self-assessment¹⁰ to prepare, the majority who did find it an effective method.

CD-ROM and Other Media

About 50% of the candidates used some type of electronic media and the majority of them found it to be somewhat to very helpful. Recommendations included:

- ▶ YouTube videos
- ▶ *The Interactive Hand* (www.theinteractivehand.com)
- ▶ The electronic version of *Rehabilitation of the Hand and Upper Extremity*
- ▶ Practice Tests from *Exploring Hand Therapy* (www.handtherapy.com) and *Hand Therapy Now* (www.handtherapynow.com)
- ▶ I used websites: Wheelless' Textbook, *Electronic textbook of Orthopaedics* from Duke University (www.wheelessonline.com) the *Electronic Textbook of Hand Surgery* (www.eatonhand.com) and then I would Google and found all kinds of things.

Traditional Continuing Education:

About 75% of candidates attended continuing education meetings in preparation for the examination, with about three-quarters of them finding it to be somewhat or very helpful. The courses were varied, from those presenting an overview of the upper quarter, to courses with content very specific to an anatomical location or diagnosis. The mostly commonly mentioned courses were:

- ▶ Annual meetings of the American Society of Hand Therapists (www.asht.org)
- ▶ ASHT Hand Therapy Review Course (www.asht.org)
- ▶ Doctors Demystify Courses (www.doctorsdemystify.com)
- ▶ Hand Care courses sponsored in even years by the Indiana Hand to Shoulder Center (www.indianahandtoshoulder.com)
- ▶ Hand Therapy Symposium, sponsored annually by the Philadelphia Hand Foundation (www.handfoundation.org)
- ▶ HandLab courses presented by Judy Colditz (www.handlab.com)

Online Continuing Education:

A little over half of the candidates took online courses to prepare for the exam. In addition to those already listed, ASHT's live webinars were recommended.

Journals:

About 80% of the candidates reviewed journal articles in preparation for the examination, this number increased by 20% since the last survey. *The Journal of Hand Therapy* (www.jhandtherapy.org) was listed almost exclusively by the respondents. Although candidates appeared to read a variety of articles, they noted the special issues, the information on research, and anatomy-related articles were particularly helpful.

*Hand Clinics*¹¹ was also mentioned as a good journal resource. Some therapists also participated in journal clubs, which they found useful.

General Tips:

A number of suggestions were made to make studying more fun and to reduce stress, such as keep your sense of humor, study while you exercise, "don't take it too seriously--it's only a test," get plenty of rest, "have a CHT on speed dial for encouragement," have a supportive spouse/family, "keep a book in the bathroom," make up lots of funny mnemonics and stories to help with memorizing, take Friday or Saturday night off for relaxation, don't plan a wedding or have a baby the year you take the test. Relax and enjoy life learning.

Other suggestions were more practical:

- ▶ Study a little bit daily vs. marathon study sessions
- ▶ Hand Therapist Peer Mentoring Manual by HTCC¹²
- ▶ Apply concepts to real people
- ▶ Ask co-workers to spot quiz you on specific cases
- ▶ Cross-reference sources by topic
- ▶ Do not cram, commit at least 6 months for studying
- ▶ Set a schedule to study 5-10 hours a week and do it
- ▶ Stop studying 3 days before taking the exam
- ▶ Study at least 4-5 hours a week with 6 months remaining
- ▶ Study at the library with no distractions
- ▶ Don't get too detailed - get the overall concepts
- ▶ Do not study obscure information
- ▶ Focus on areas that are your "weakness"
- ▶ Focus on learning the material and the concept - not memorization

General Tips *(continued)*

- ▶ Use the HTCC Blueprint as a starting point – it tells you what you need to know for the test
- ▶ Keep track of the questions you answered wrong on practice tests
- ▶ Know your own study habits, don't worry about others
- ▶ Study new concepts/evidence based practice
- ▶ Read, read and read
- ▶ Study in a quiet place
- ▶ Do not solely focus on the practice exams
- ▶ Fabricate a personal "CHT study guide" binder
- ▶ Find a challenging work environment
- ▶ Try to observe surgery
- ▶ Incorporate your current caseload into your studies
- ▶ Keep reviewing previously studied materials
- ▶ Keep a notebook with items you found difficult
- ▶ Know healing timelines for structures/protocols
- ▶ Know the hows of modalities as well as the whys
- ▶ Know the protocols, but also the clinical reasoning behind them
- ▶ Review manual therapy books
- ▶ Muscle test everybody!
- ▶ Remember the importance of research
- ▶ Study alone and phone a friend with questions
- ▶ Take a study leave (4 hours/week) if you can – it is invaluable
- ▶ Think global, big picture
- ▶ Don't be afraid of splinting
- ▶ Study anatomy
- ▶ Work with a mentor
- ▶ Take practice exams
- ▶ Establish a timeline
- ▶ Draw brachial plexus/anatomy
- ▶ YouTube videos

General Tips *(continued)*

Finally, candidates made suggestions for the day of the test:

- ▶ Rest before the exam, eat a good breakfast
- ▶ Don't try studying the morning of the test
- ▶ Complete at least 50 questions every hour during test
- ▶ Don't panic
- ▶ Don't over-analyze the questions
- ▶ Don't second guess your answers

Study Groups

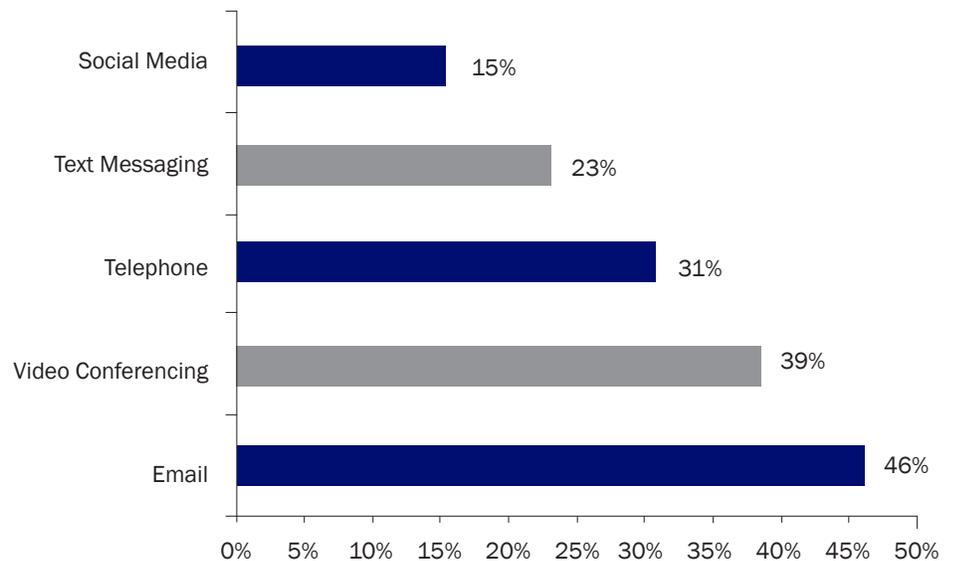
Therapists were also asked how study groups were utilized by candidates who participated in them while preparing for the examination.

9. How did your group meet?

About 25% of the therapist's surveyed indicated that they participated in a study group with the majority meeting in person.

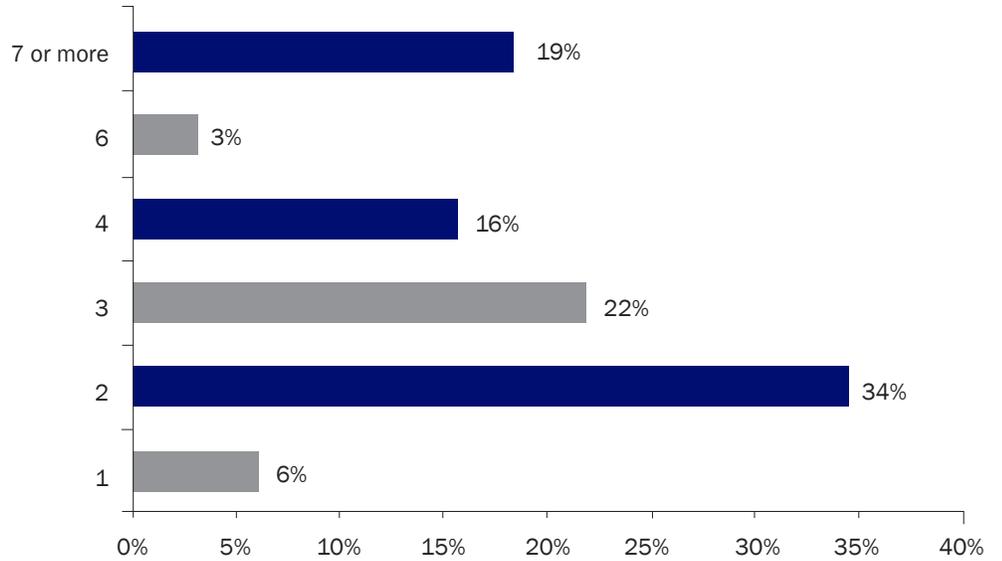
10. If your study group was online, how did you communicate with your group *(choose all that apply)*

If your study group was online, how did you communicate with your group *(choose all that apply)*

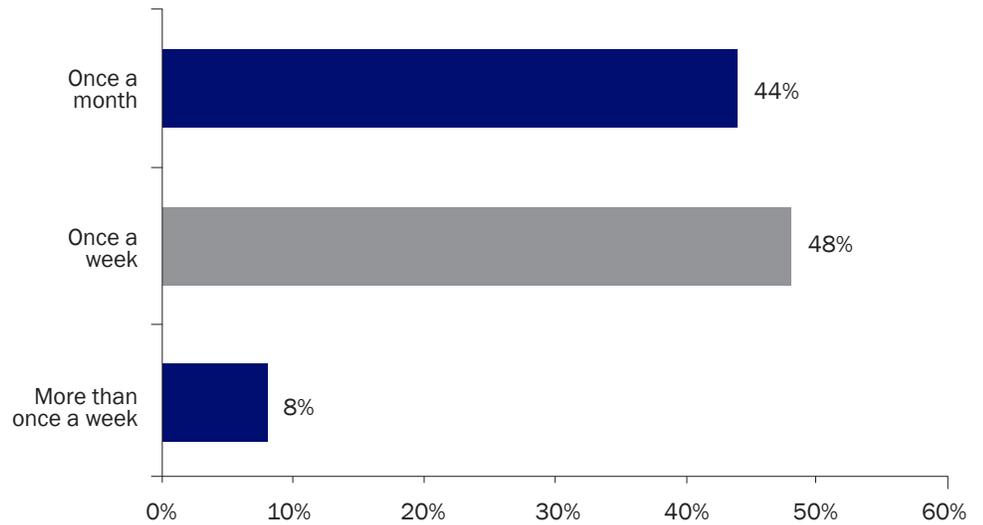


11. Number of Study Group Participants

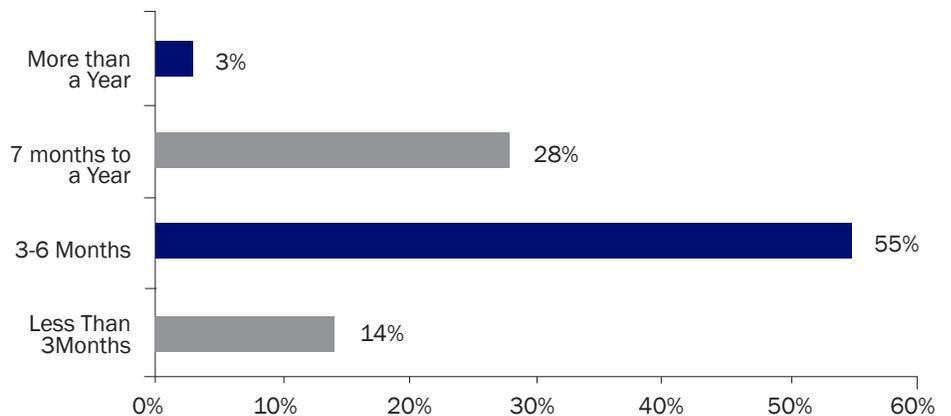
Fifty-six percent of the respondents stated that they had between 2-3 members in their study groups.



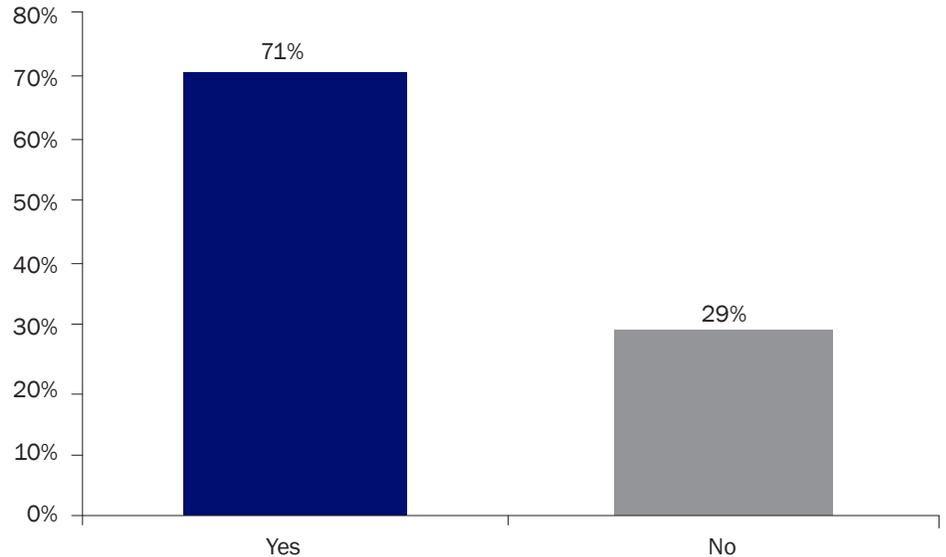
12. How often did your study group meet?



13. How long did you study group meet?



14. Did you assign topics?



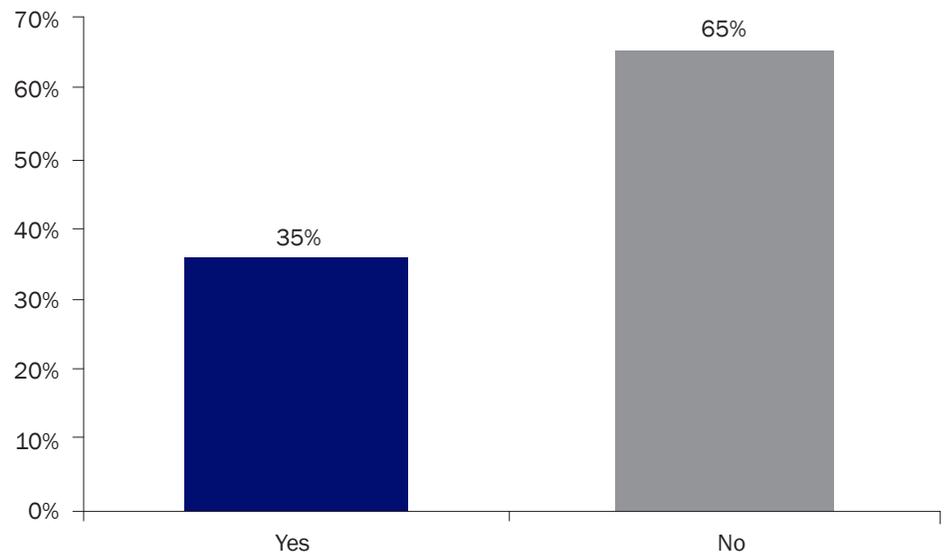
The majority of study groups assigned topics according to a reference such as *Rehabilitation of the Hand and Upper Extremity*, the Test Prep Book from the American Society of Hand Therapists (ASHT) or *Hand Rehabilitation: A Quick Reference Guide* (also sometimes referred to as “*The Purple Book*”) from Exploring Hand Therapy. Chapters in these reference books were divided amongst the group members and presented during the study group time. In some instances sample test questions were generated based upon assigned topics.

Other methods to assign topics included:

- ▶ Each group member picked a topic, did all the research, prepared all the materials, presented it to the group and gave everyone the material for later studying.
- ▶ Each therapist was assigned 3 topics. Topics were pre-recorded onto “webex” an online web conferencing site. Each member went on-line to view the webex material and we discussed them during our monthly meeting.
- ▶ I compiled a list of topics and everyone prepared 3 questions to share with the group for a weekly question and answer session.
- ▶ The overall format was set up according to one of the hand therapy study guides. Each group participant volunteered to thoroughly investigate a topic and provide the information, which included visual aids, handouts, etc.
- ▶ We were each assigned a chapter to present to the group but we were all responsible for reviewing all of the chapters for that particular session.

- ▶ People who felt weak on a topic chose to pick that topic to present to the group.
- ▶ Those people that were familiar with the specific topic would present that topic; otherwise, we would discuss each topic and find out what everyone knew/read about it.
- ▶ We followed the blueprint provided by HTCC.
- ▶ We mapped out a schedule in early October and read the same material. We tended to recall different aspects of the material and explained it to each other and helped each other with recall strategies.
- ▶ We met at first to break down the anatomy by body part and further categories of pathologies, treatment and anatomy.
- ▶ We organized the material by weeks, so each week we split up certain subtopics relating to a larger topic and each summarized the info for the others in the group. We often gave each other typed summaries for reference.
- ▶ We would choose a topic, all would read about it and summarize and discuss it at our weekly group meeting.

15. Did you prepare for the exam working with a mentor?



Social Media

Therapists were also asked if they utilized social media to help prepare for the examination.

About 15% of the therapists surveyed indicated that they utilized social media with the majority using Facebook or Twitter. Other types of social media used included Pinterest, YouTube, Google Groups, Skype and Linked In.

Therapists indicated that they used social media to:

- ▶ Network with other CHTs
- ▶ Create study guides
- ▶ Look up anatomy and splint designs on Pinterest
- ▶ Watch YouTube instructional videos on special tests and anatomy
- ▶ Help create charts and diagrams

HTCC would like to thank to all the candidates who completed the survey. We think that their advice will be invaluable to future candidates. For more information about the CHT credential, please visit www.htcc.org or call 800-960-7097.

References and Contact Information for Suggested Resources

- ¹ ASHT Hand Therapy Review Course www.asht.org
- ² Hand Therapy Now Practice Exams www.handtherapynow.com
- ³ Rehabilitation of the Hand and Upper Extremity: Mackin, E., Callahan, A.D., Skirven, T., Schneider, L.H., & Osterman, A.L. (Eds.)
- ⁴ Hand Rehabilitation: A Quick Reference Guide and Review: Falkenstein, N., Weiss, S.
- ⁵ ASHT Test Prep for the CHT Exam www.asht.org
- ⁶ Hand Secrets: Jebson, P.J.L. & Kasdan, M.L. (Eds.)
- ⁷ Flashcard Deluxe: www.flashcardsdeluxe.com/flashcards/
- ⁸ Quizlet www.quizlet.com/
- ⁹ Netter Anatomy Flashcards, available at Amazon.com
- ¹⁰ HTCC Self-Assessment www.htcc.org/mentoring/htcc-self-assessment
- ¹¹ Hand Clinics: www.hand.theclinics.com/
- ¹² The Hand Therapist Peer Mentoring Manual: www.htcc.org/mentoring/mentoring-handbook

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