



Background and Objectives

Becoming more advice-oriented regarding preventive herd health consultancy is challenging for dairy veterinarians. A communication skills (CS) methodology that supports advising skills is Motivational Interviewing (MI); it promotes internal motivation of farmers to change behavior.

The objective was to examine effects of various CS education interventions on dairy veterinarians regarding their ability to gather and provide information.

Study participants

Veterinarians, n=28

4 female, 27-62 years of age, 3-38 years in veterinary practice, varying CS training experience, submitted 2-17 audio recordings.

Herd health visits, n=353

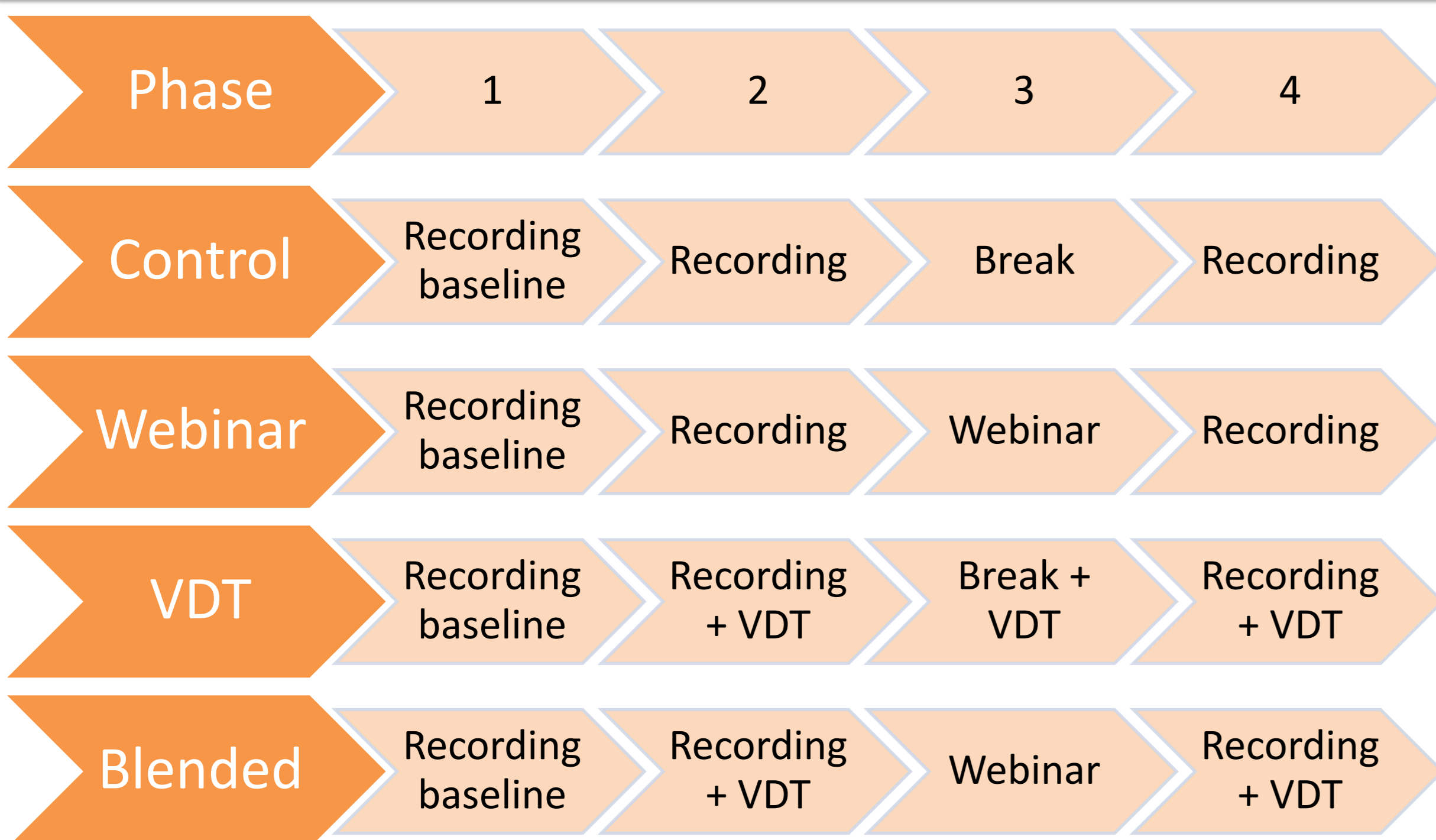
Coding for MI skills was possible for 48% (n=171). Combined pre and post intervention MITI recordings (n=150) were available for 16 participants: control group, n=3; Webinar group, n=3; VDT group, n=5; Blended group, n=5.

Materials and methods

Longitudinal randomized controlled trial

Participants audio recorded herd health visits and were allocated into four groups in the following study design.

- 1) Control, no intervention
- 2) Webinar, 1.5-day webinar, small group setting
- 3) Veterinary DialogueTrainer (VDT), online training tool
- 4) Blended, combining webinar and VDT



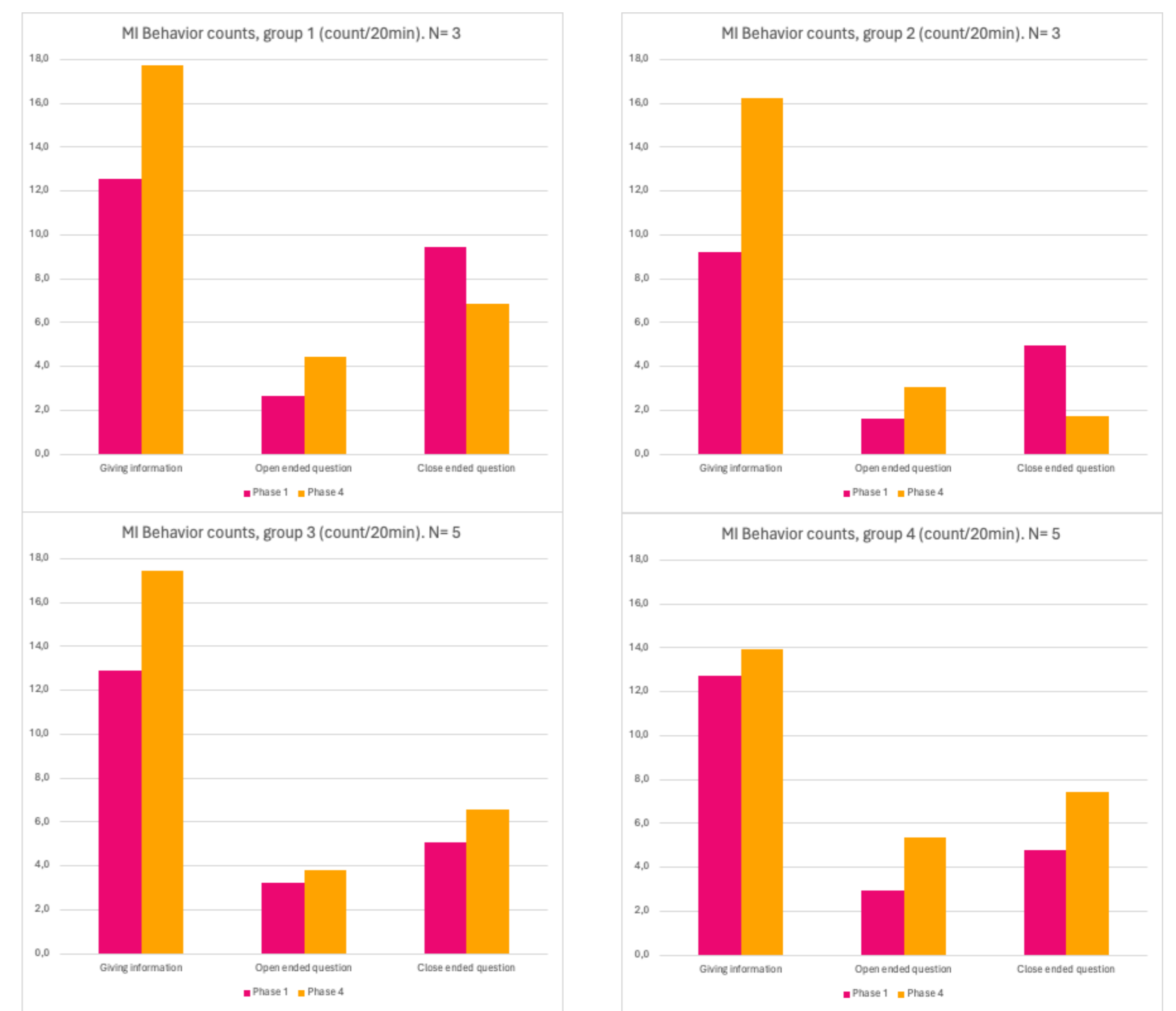
Collected data

A 20-minute fragment of recorded visits that focused on advising the farmer was assessed using the Motivational Interviewing Treatment Integrity code 4.2 (MITI). MI behaviors relating to gathering and providing information were counted pre intervention (phase 1) and post intervention (phase 4); Giving information (GI), Open ended questions (OQ), Closed ended questions (CQ).

Results and discussion

Results

GI increased in all groups. OQ increased in all groups, with OQ number almost doubling in groups 2 and 4. CQ count varied, with groups 1 and 3 asking less and groups 2 and 4 asking more CQ post-intervention.



Bar charts demonstrate the count of GI, OQ and CQ per 20 minutes, pre (phase 1) and post intervention (phase 4). N= number of veterinarians

Discussion

Possible explanation for increased OQ and GI across all clusters might be the influence of being recorded, i.e., Hawthorne effect. Groups 2 and 4 had the greatest OQ increase, pointing to small learning groups possibly being more effective than VDT only.

Conclusions

- Small group webinar or blended learning intervention appeared most effective in improving CS of dairy veterinarians related to gathering and providing information.
- Results highlight the complexity of MI research in real life consultations. Further research is needed to assess whether CS training leads to sustainable changes in veterinarians' MI skills.

