

Xylazine Wound Care Among PWUD Accessing Massachusetts Syringe Service Programs

¹Samia A Ismail BS, ²Margaret Shang MD, ³Stephen Murray MPH, NRP, ⁴Cristina Murray-Krezan PhD, ⁴Yihao Zheng MS, ⁴Gary McMurtrie BA, ^{2,4}Jane Liebschutz MD, MPH, ^{2,4}Raagini Jawa MD, MPH, FASAM

¹Boston University School of Public Health, Boston, MA, ²University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, PA, ³Boston Medical Center, Boston, MA, ⁴Center for Research in Healthcare, Division of General Internal Medicine, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA

Background

- Xylazine is an adulterant increasingly prevalent in the illicit opioid supply in Massachusetts (MA)
- People who use drugs (PWUD) exposed to xylazine often present with distinct wounds that can heal with medical care and self-treatment
- Understanding medical wound care experiences and wound self-treatment practices is critical to preventing further harm

Methods

175 PWUD past-year wounds at 3 MA syringe service programs (SSPs) in August 2023

33-item anonymous Qualtrics survey of multiple choice and free text questions on:

- ✓ Drug use practices
- ✓ Xylazine exposure
- ✓ Past experiences seeking medical care for wounds
- ✓ Past 90-day wound development
- ✓ Wound self-treatment practices

Responses analyzed using descriptive statistics and inductive content analysis

Participants given \$25 compensation

Outcomes Assessed

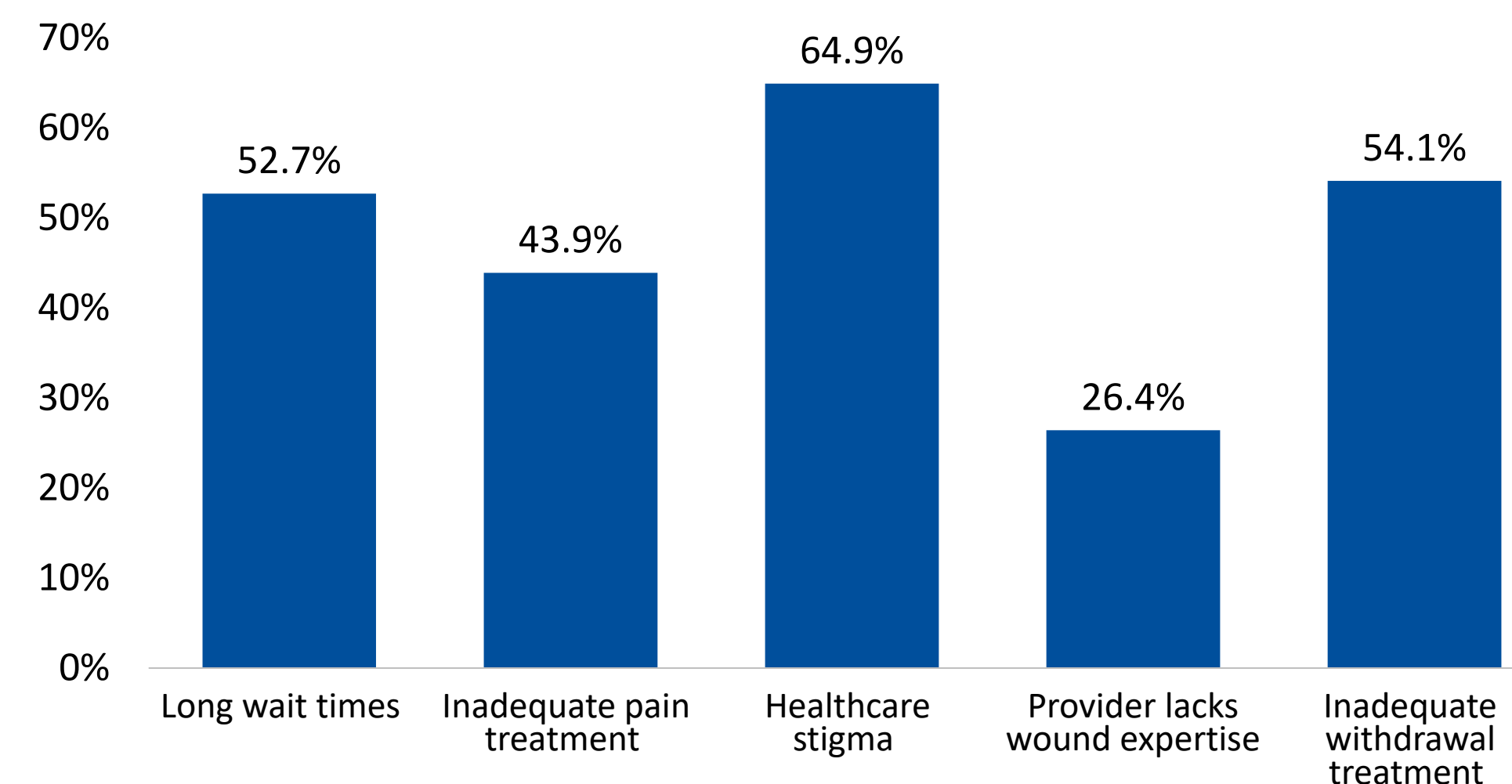
1. PWUD experiences receiving medical care for wounds
2. PWUD wound self-treatment practices

Results

1 Medical Wound Care Experiences

- N=171, 63% male, 63% white, 67% non-Hispanic
- 87% (N=148) had a suspected past 90-day xylazine wound
- Majority reported provider stigma, inadequate withdrawal management, and long wait times

Figure 1. Barriers to medical wound care experienced by PWUD with xylazine wounds (N=148)



“Nurses accuse me of lying about not injecting because I have a wound.”

2 Wound Self-Treatment Practices

Figure 2. Wound cleansers used by PWUD with xylazine wounds (N=148)

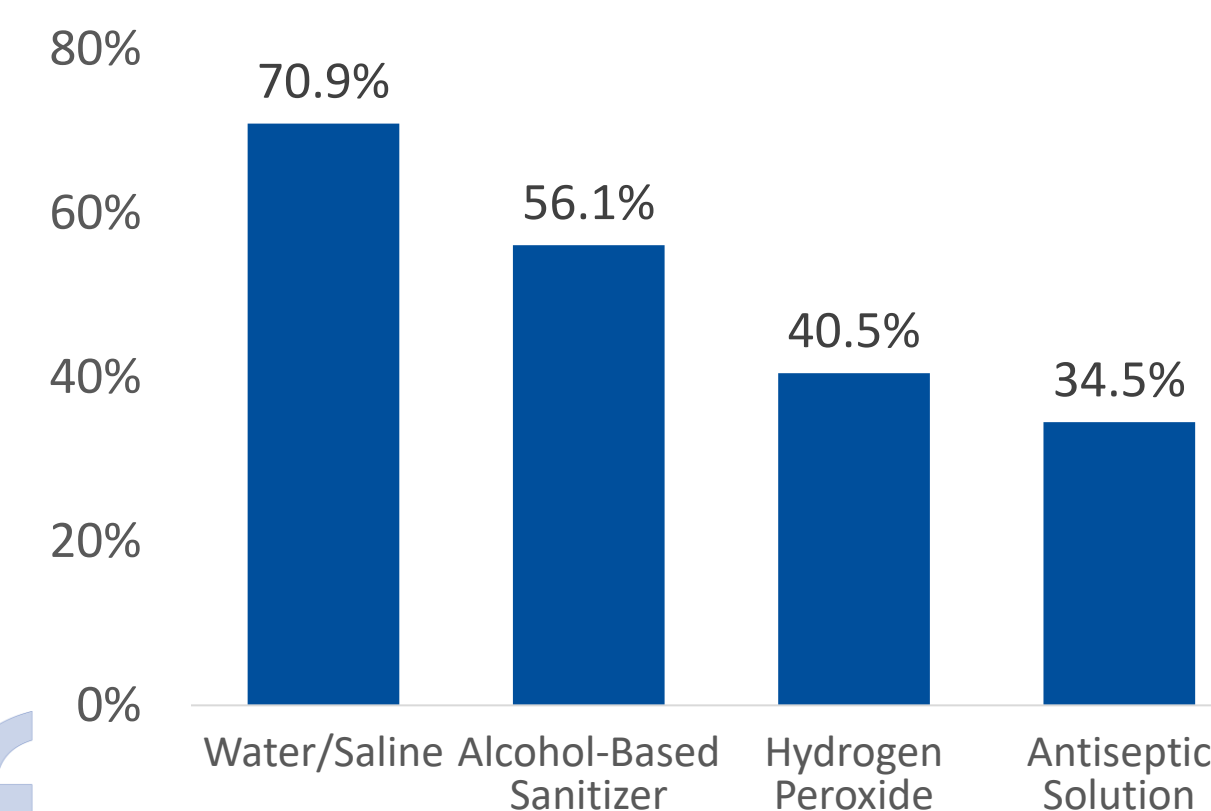
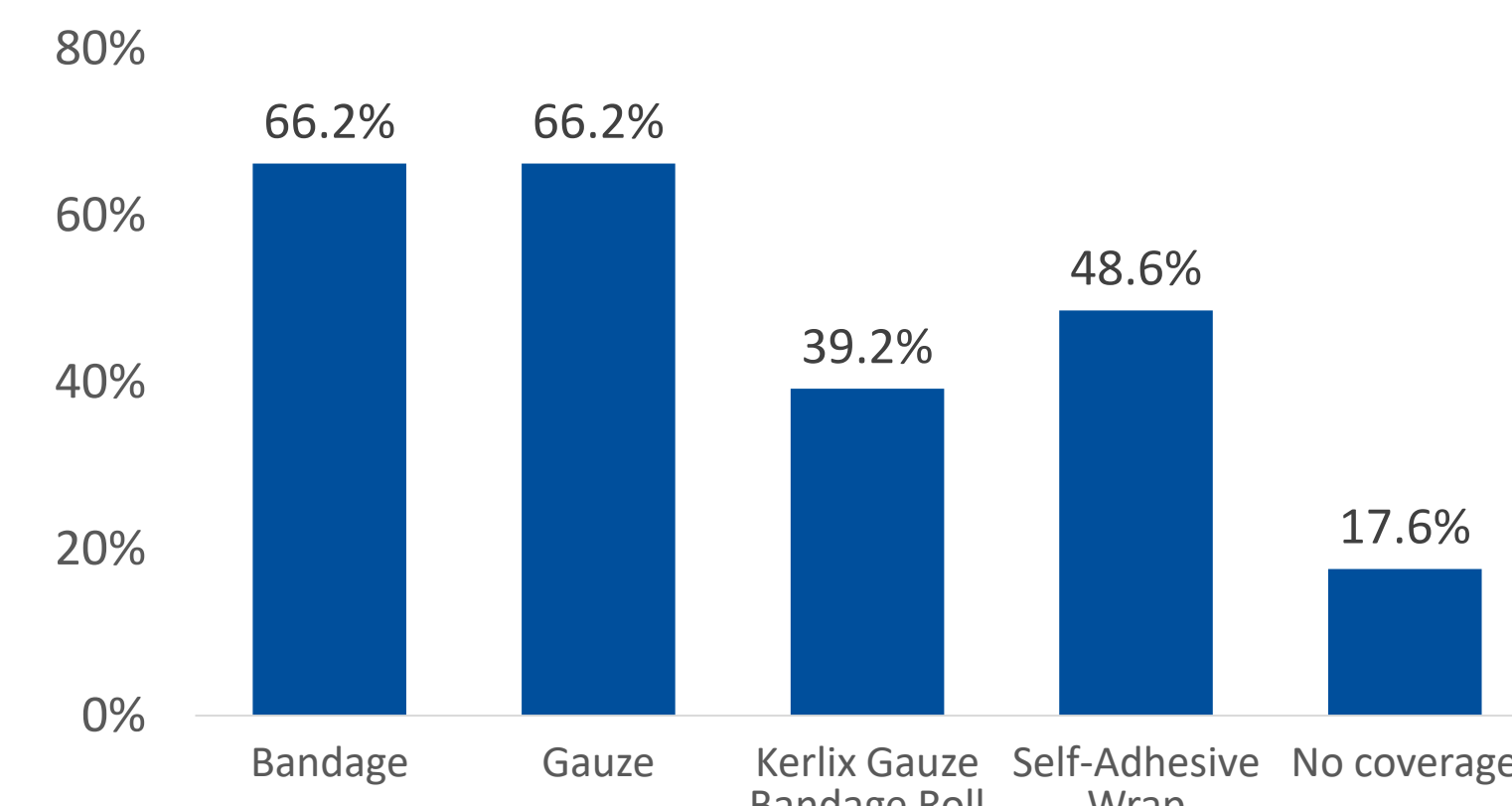


Figure 3. Wound coverage techniques used by PWUD with xylazine wounds (N=148)



“I cover my wound with whatever I have at work toilet paper, duct tape, paper towels.”

Conclusion

- Majority of PWUD seeking services at MA SSPs reported experiencing xylazine wounds concerning for xylazine exposure
- Interrupted or delayed medical care may contribute to advanced wound progression
- PWUD with xylazine wounds face several barriers to receiving medical care
- Use of caustic cleansing agents by PWUD with xylazine wounds was common and could slow healing

Key Takeaways

- » Decreasing stigma and managing withdrawal symptoms makes medical care accessible at earlier stages of wound development
- » Standardized xylazine wound self-care information is urgently needed

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