

# Xylazine Wound Care Among PWUD Accessing Massachusetts Syringe Service Programs

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## 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

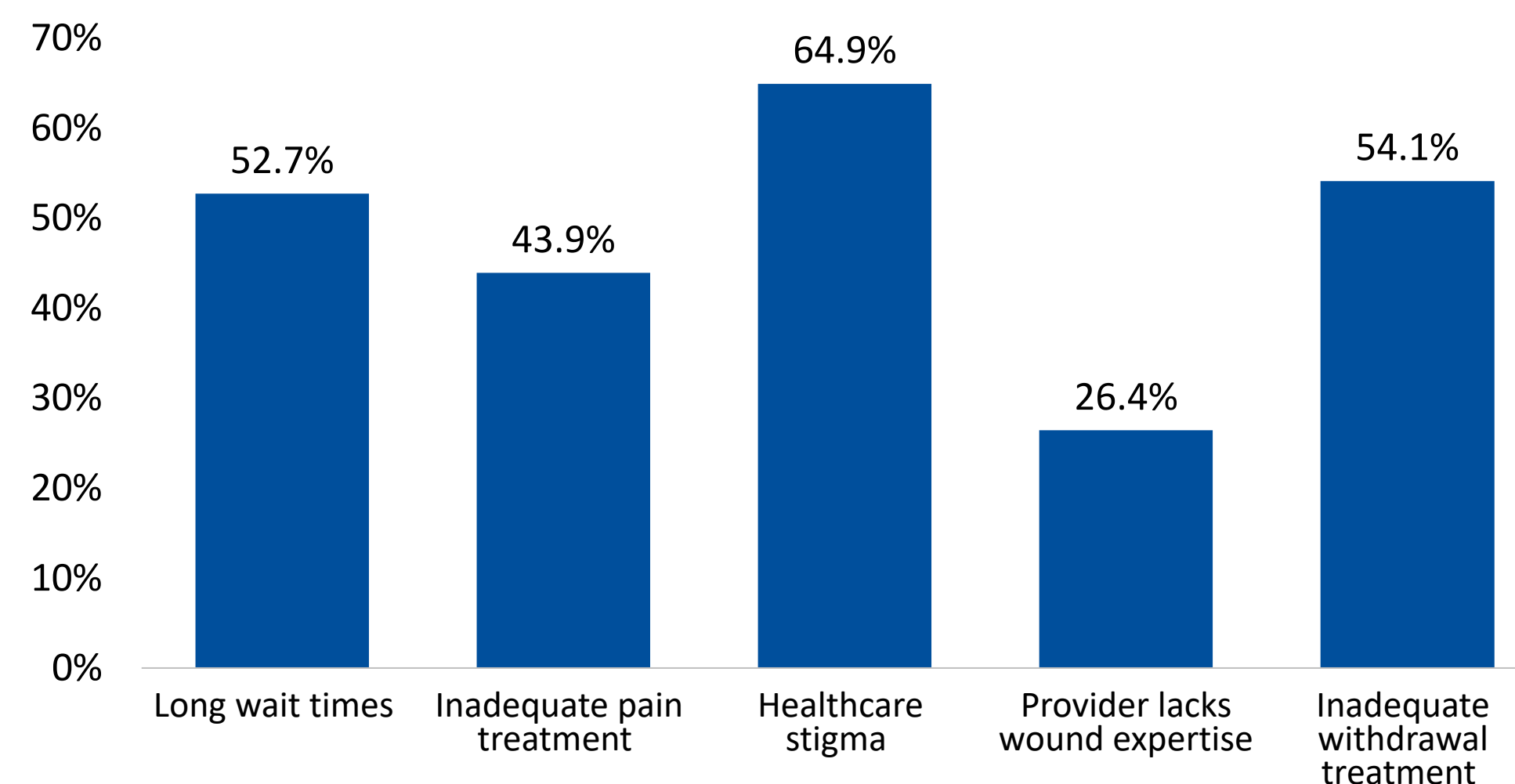
1. PWUD experiences receiving medical care for wounds
2. PWUD wound self-treatment practices

## 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

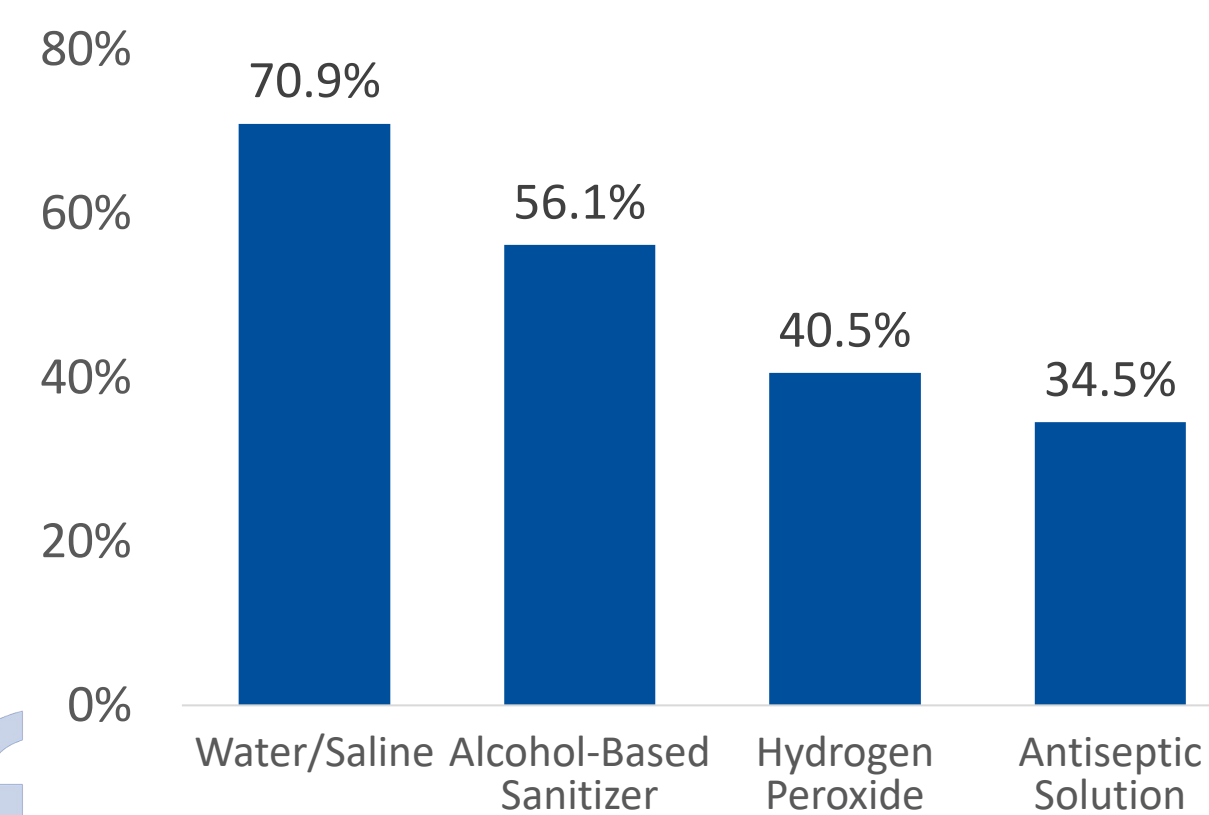
**Figure 1.** Barriers to medical wound care experienced by PWUD with xylazine wounds (N=148)



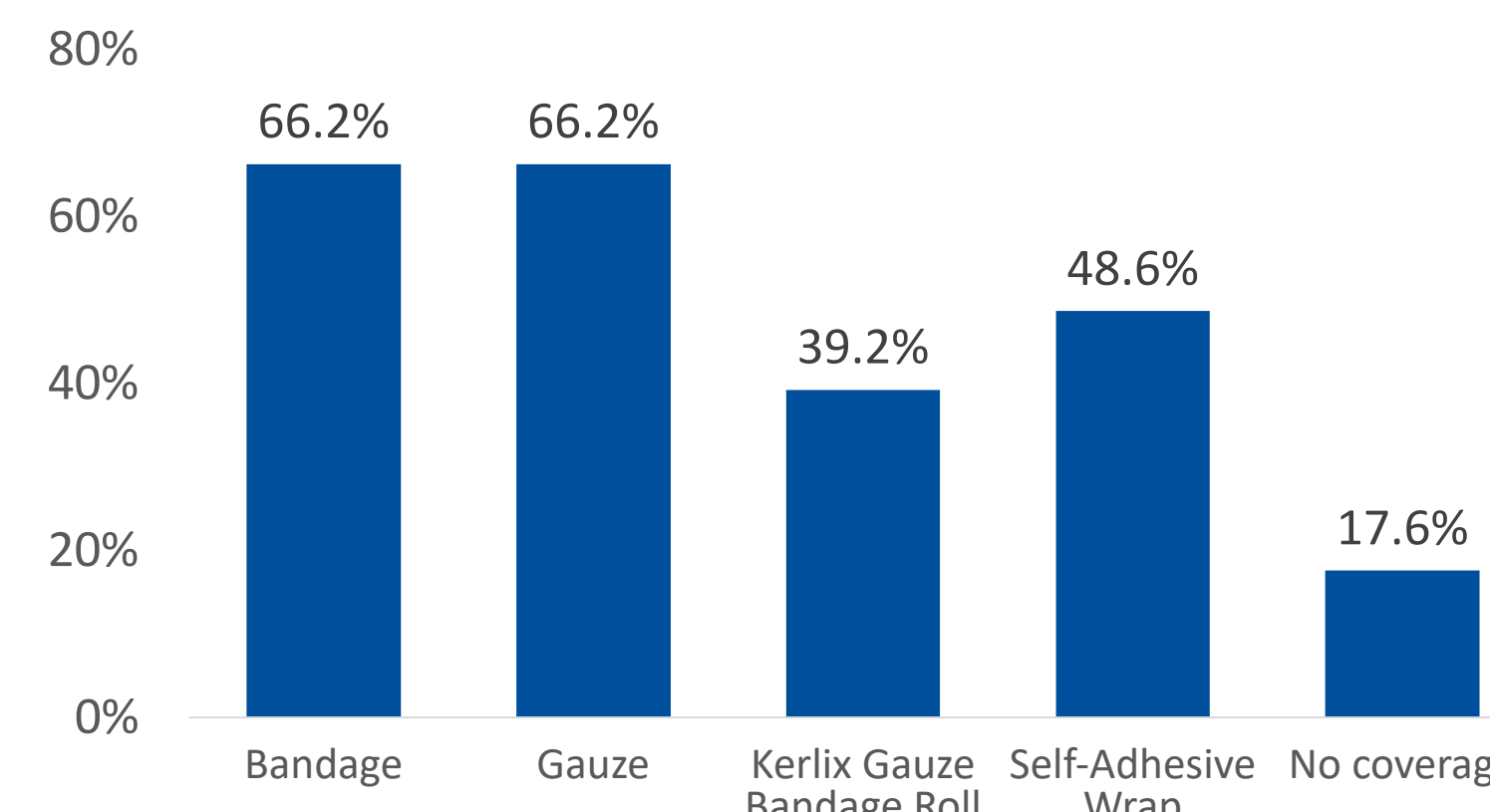
“Nurses accuse me of lying about not injecting because I have a wound.”

### 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

## References

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