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BACKGROUND

- Xylazine, a veterinary sedative, is increasingly prevalent in illicit drug markets in the Northeastern United States.
- Use of xylazine has been linked to wounds and severe necrotic skin ulcerations, but epidemiologic data is limited.

OBJECTIVE

- To estimate the prevalence of xylazine-associated wounds and characterize their occurrence among people who inject drugs (PWID) in Baltimore, Maryland.

RESULTS

Table 1. Sample Characteristics (N=300)

	Yes Wound	No Wound	X ² p-value
N	114	186	
Race/ethnicity			<0.001*
Non-Hispanic White	59%	24%	
Non-Hispanic Black	32%	69%	
Hispanic/Other	10%	5%	
Age			0.011*
18-29	5%	4%	
30-39	32%	21%	
40-49	32%	25%	
50+	31%	50%	
Gender identity			0.999
Woman	32%	31%	
Man	68%	67%	
Highest education level			0.021*
No high school diploma	28%	30%	
High school or GED	37%	49%	
Higher education	33%	20%	
Homeless in the past 12 months	75%	50%	<0.001*
Currently homeless	61%	39%	0.518
In the past 12 months...			
Used a drug they knew for sure was xylazine	44%	26%	0.002*
Experienced noticeable changes or damage in their nose or nasal passages	46%	39%	0.217
Had a skin or soft tissue infection	76%	18%	<0.001*
Used fentanyl	69%	57%	0.040*
Used heroin	72%	83%	0.026*
Used cocaine	77%	76%	0.866

Column percentages may not add up to 100% due to No, Missing, Don't Know, and Refused responses. Chi-square tests compared the proportion of Yes and No responses.

*p-value < 0.05

38% experienced a wound, of whom
70% perceived wound to be related to xylazine

METHODS

- Design:** Rapid assessment among PWID
- Sample:** 300 PWID recruited using respondent driven sampling
- Data collection:** May – June 2024
- Setting:** Baltimore, Maryland
- Study instruments:**
 - Interviewer-administered surveys assessed xylazine and other drug use, socio-demographic, behavioral, health and service utilization characteristics.
 - Participants reported wounds based on similarity to clinical description and images, and described timing, severity, and their perceived likelihood of association with xylazine.
- Analysis:** Descriptive statistics.

Among those who **ever experienced a wound** like the description or image provided (N=114)...

64% reported **more than one wound** in the past 12 months
56% reported wound **within the last month**

Among those who perceived their wounds were **related to xylazine** (N=80)...

68% had ever **sought any care** for wound
65% had ever **delayed getting care** for wound that did not go away on its own
41% described most recent wound as **small blister or bump**
23% as a **small ulcer or lesion**
14% as a **deep ulcer or with necrotic eschar**
61% reported wound at **injection site**

Among those who used a drug in the past 12 months they **knew for sure was xylazine** (N=98)...

23% used xylazine by **itself**.....at least a few times a week
65% used **fentanyl** with xylazine.....at least a few times a week
23% used **benzos** with xylazine.....at least a few times a week
43% used **other drugs** with xylazine.....at least a few times a week

CONCLUSIONS

- Wound prevalence and nasal damage among PWID is substantial.
- Xylazine harm reduction and wound care should encompass a range of wound severity, including care for nasal damage.
- Population prevalence estimates that account for respondent driven sampling may differ from unweighted sample prevalence.
- Further analyses to examine factors associated with wounds and nasal damage will help inform prevention and healthcare needs.

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