



Community pharmacists' attitudes toward and practice of pharmacy-based harm reduction.

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Introduction

- Community pharmacists can improve health outcomes for patients who use drugs
 - 89% of US population lives within 5 miles of a pharmacy¹
- In Pittsburgh, PA, recent legal changes set the stage for an expanded role for community pharmacists
 - Increased ability to offer harm reduction services
 - Allows sales at discretion of pharmacists
- Harm reduction services: Evidence-based interventions aimed at reducing health risks associated with drug use, including providing:
 - Naloxone for overdose prevention
 - Sterile needles and injection equipment
 - Screening for HIV/HCV
 - Fentanyl test strips
 - Education on safer drug use

OBJECTIVE: To examine the behavior, attitudes, and knowledge of harm reduction services among community pharmacists in Pittsburgh.

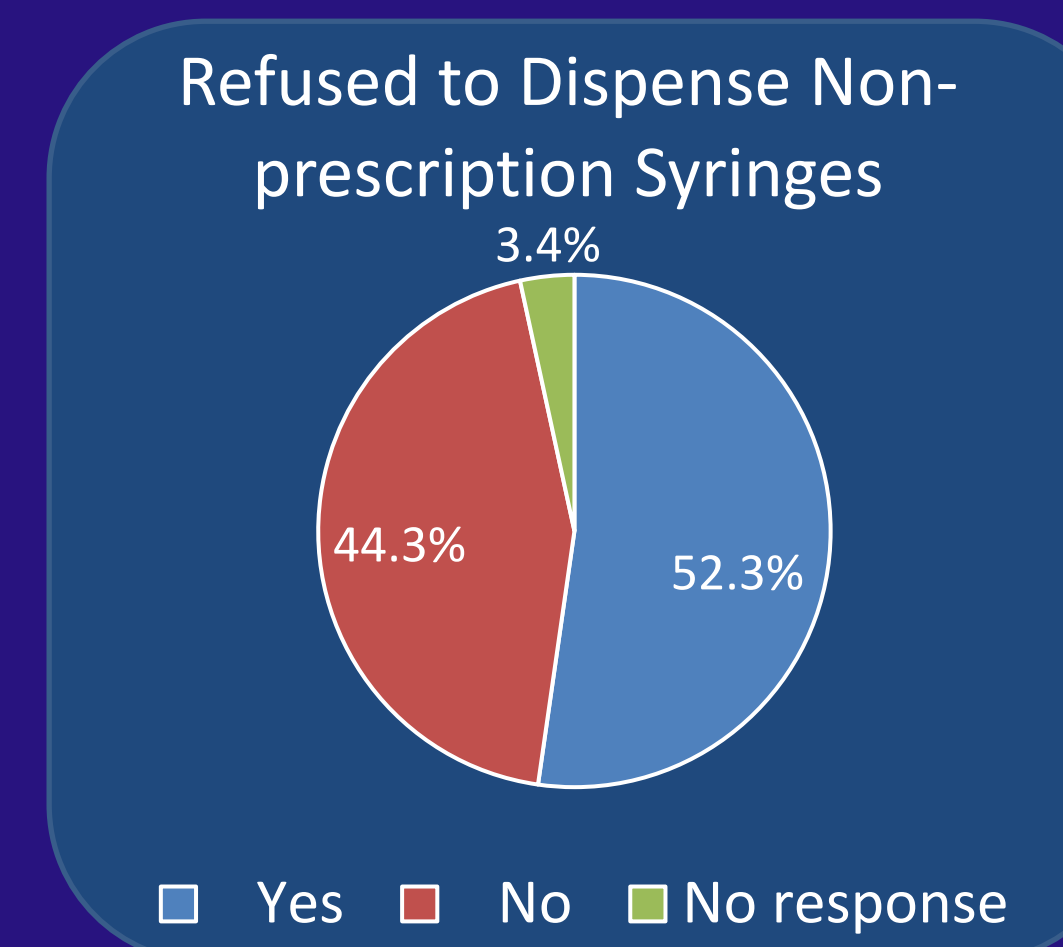
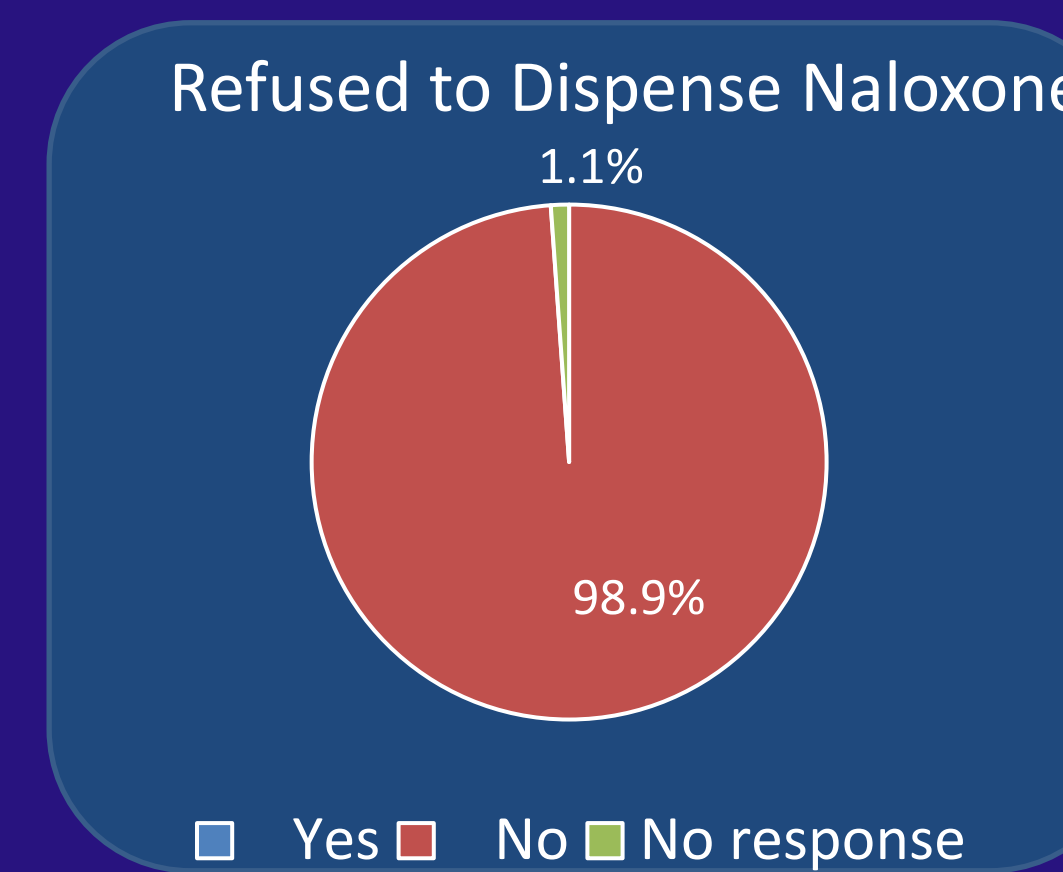
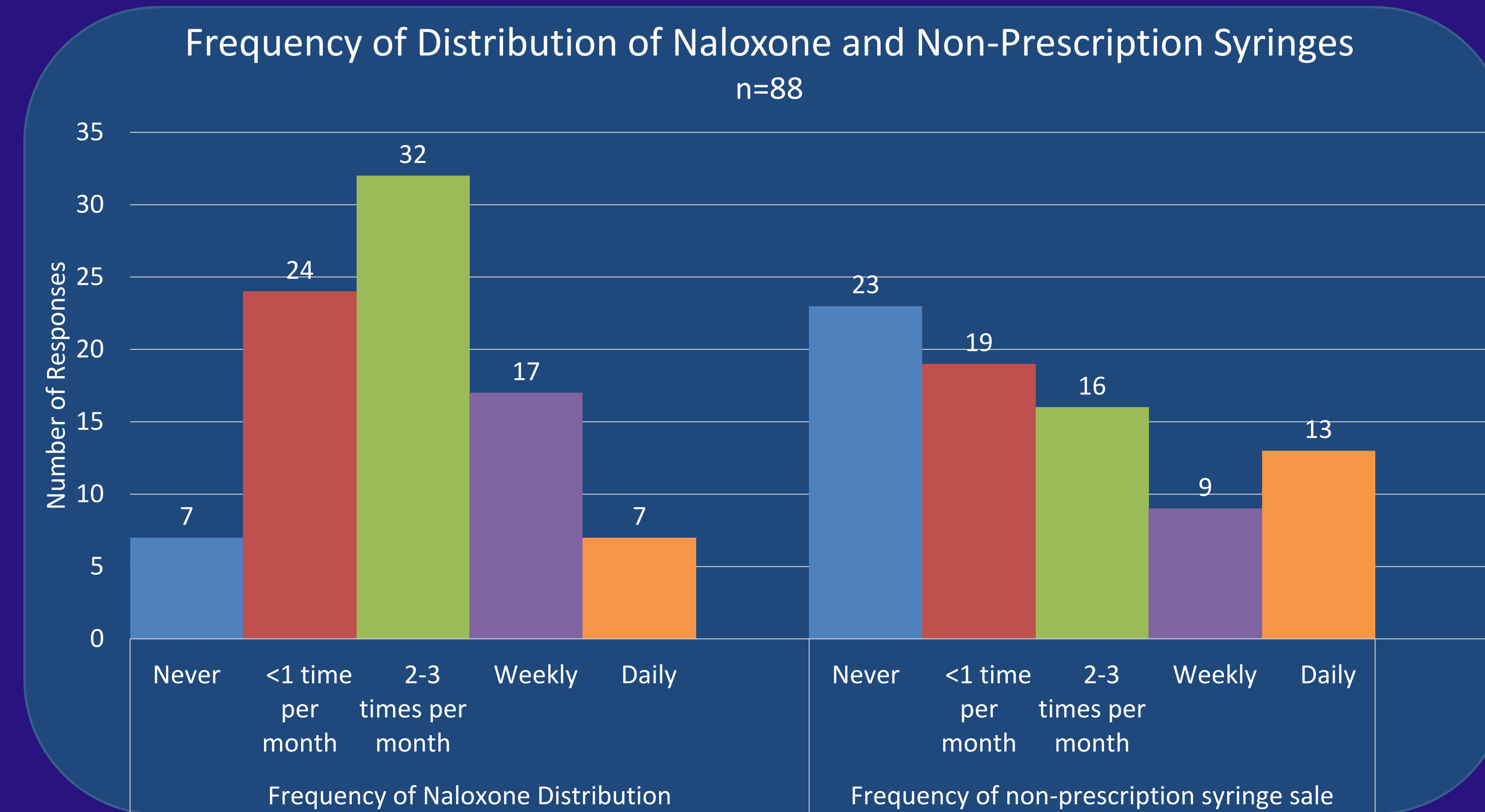
Methods

PARTICIPANTS: Licensed pharmacists practicing in the 5-mile radius of University of Pittsburgh Medical Center.

DATA COLLECTION: A 53-question, online survey was created by adapting validated questions from literature. Investigators traveled to 83 pharmacies and distributed flyers with a QR code link to the survey from July to August 2022.

ANALYSIS: Descriptive statistics with frequencies and proportions for categorical variables and means and standard deviations (medians/quartiles for skewed distributions) for continuous variables.

Results



"It is my store's policy that all syringe/needle sales must be from a prescription"

"Due to syringes being found in the parking lot and bathrooms we choose not to sell them due to the risk to other patients. We also had a child step on a syringe a few years ago that was left in the parking lot."

"...I do not believe enabling or assisting their behavior is going to help them. My job is to keep my community healthy and I do not think selling syringes is in alignment with that goal."

DEMOGRAPHICS:

- Mean age: 37 years old (SD 10.97)
- Gender: 64.8% female, 35.2% male,
- Race/ethnicity: 95.5% White, 4.5% Other

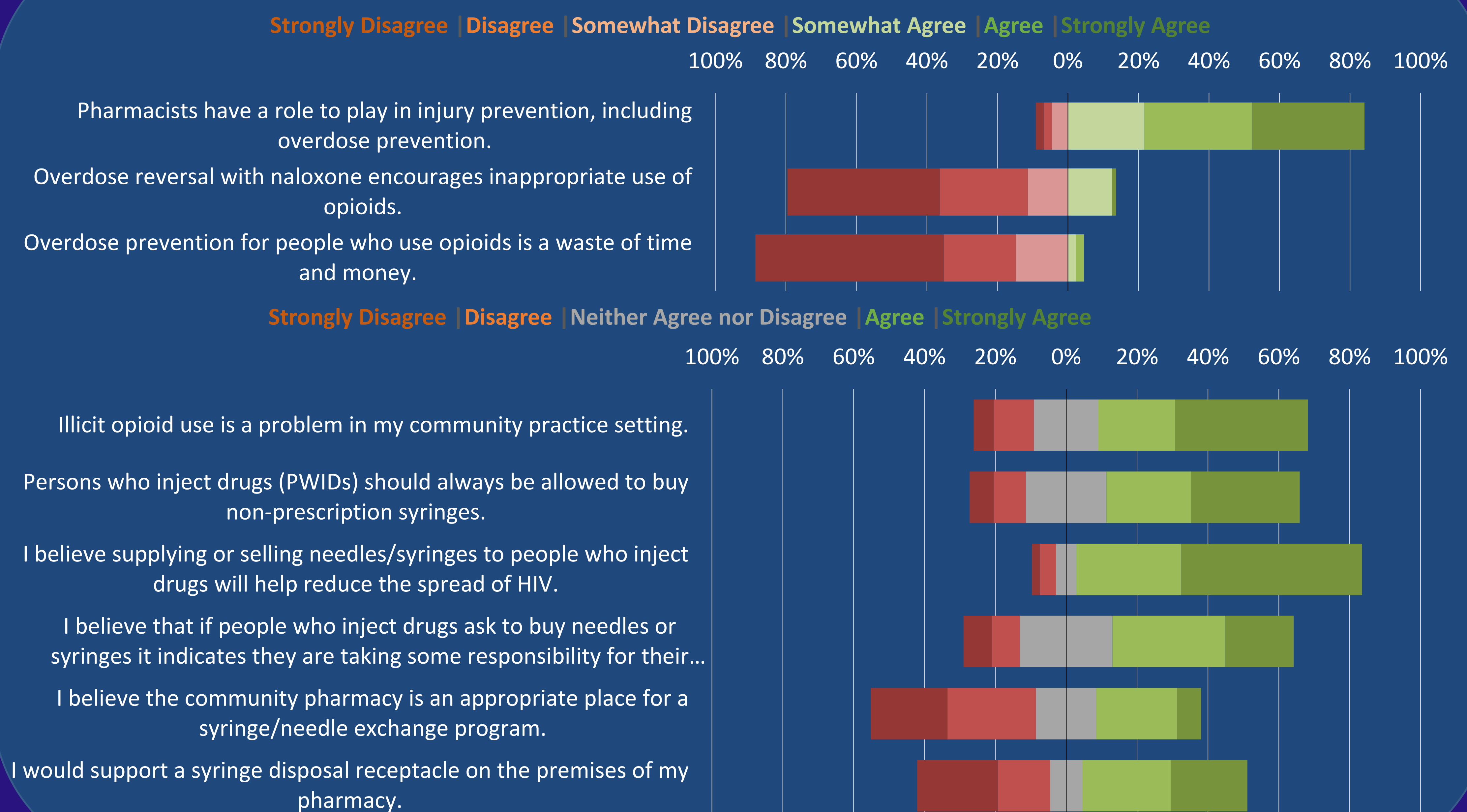
BEHAVIOR & ATTITUDES: Pharmacists viewed naloxone more favorably than use of non-prescription syringes (NPS) by people who use drugs.

- Though 91% of pharmacists reported dispensing naloxone, only 44% reported talking about overdose prevention
- 3x more pharmacists reported having never distributed NPS than never distributing naloxone
- No pharmacists reported refusing to dispense naloxone, but 55% refused to sell NPS
- Pharmacists demonstrated positive attitudes toward overdose prevention using naloxone and their role in its distribution
- Pharmacists reported feeling that NPS were beneficial to PWID but attitudes varied toward a pharmacist's role in providing them.

KNOWLEDGE: Pharmacists' knowledge of local laws concerning harm reduction practices was high overall.

BARRIERS: Pharmacist reported **lack of time** and **staffing issues** as the biggest barriers to more comprehensive services for PWID at their pharmacies.

Pharmacist Attitudes Toward Harm Reduction Practices



Conclusions

- Pharmacists in Pittsburgh are participating in harm reduction by distributing naloxone and non-prescription syringes/needles.
- Results reflect that pharmacists have embraced the practice of naloxone distribution but feelings and behaviors around the sale of non-prescription syringes for harm reduction use are mixed.
- Lack of knowledge about harm reduction practices was not as significant a barrier to greater provision of harm reduction services as lack of time and staffing.

Authors & Disclosures

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