

Update on Emerging Drug Contaminants: Xylazine

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- We respectfully acknowledge that we live and work in territories where Indigenous nations and Tribal groups are traditional stewards of the land.
- Please join us in supporting efforts to affirm Tribal sovereignty across what is now known as California and in displaying respect, honor and gratitude for all Indigenous people.


Whose land are you on?

Option 1: Text your zip code to 1-855-917-5263

Option 2: Enter your location at <https://native-land.ca>

Option 3: Access Native Land website via QR Code:





What we say and how we say it inspires the hope and belief that recovery is possible for everyone.

Affirming, respectful, and culturally-informed language promotes evidence-based care.

PEOPLE FIRST

Language Matters

in treatment, in conversation, in connection.





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HISTORY
MONTH

February 2023



The University of Texas at Austin
PhARM Program

Update on Emerging Drug Contaminants: Xylazine

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Disclosures

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Cheryl Ho, MD

Stock or Stock options

Johnson & Johnson

Pfizer, Roche, Eli Lilly

All of the relevant financial relationships listed for this individual have been mitigated.



Learning Objectives

1. Recognize three (3) pharmacological effects of xylazine in humans.
2. Distinguish two (2) major types of harm caused by xylazine use, in both short and long-term contexts.
3. Identify three (3) harm reduction techniques which can be applied to xylazine use.
4. Propose two (2) harm reduction approaches to use for xylazine in current practice.





VICE News

Drug Users Are Losing Their Fingers and Toes After Shooting 'Tranq Dope'

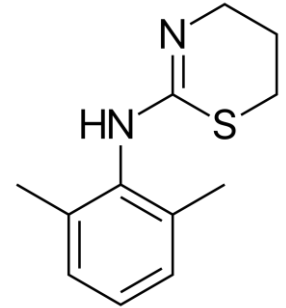
In Philadelphia, the animal tranquilizer xylazine has infiltrated the opioid supply, and it's been linked to horrific wounds and amputations.



By [Manisha Krishnan](#)

Wait, *What?*

- Xylazine – a derivative of clonidine
- Alpha-2 agonist
- Used only in animals
- It's probably being **diverted** (purchased or stolen) from veterinary pharmaceutical suppliers, research labs, and other above-ground sources
- Being added chiefly to **heroin/FASH**, but also reported in **cocaine** so far
- No strip test widely available **yet**, can only be detected with FTIR or GCMS (\$\$)



- **Acute (immediate, short-term) effects**
- Profound sedation
- Low blood pressure
- Slow heart rate
- Weak or absent reflexes

- **Chronic (gradual, long-term) effects**
- Severe skin wounds
- Anemia
- Dysglycemia (usually hyper)

Sympatholytic

fight-or-flight nervous system

breaks down/suppresses



Wounds

- The most striking aspect!
- Consistently described as:
 - Forms a **thick eschar** as they heal
 - Develop in areas **other than** where the patient injected
 - Large and **difficult to heal**
 - **Necrotic** areas are commonly reported
 - **Granular** in appearance, **burn-like**
- Can also involve loss of fingers/toes
- Appears vascular, *but we don't really know*
- Secondary bacterial infection all but guaranteed for people experiencing homelessness



Chronic Issues

- With chronic, ongoing use of xylazine...
- **Anemia** (unclear cause)
 - Usually noticed as:
 - Weakness/fatigue
 - Brain fog
 - Irregular heartbeat
 - Feeling cold easily
- **Blood sugar irregularities**
 - Usually hyperglycemia
 - Unclear if transient
 - Has been noted in vet literature
- Loss of some **autonomic tone**
 - Reports of dulled reflexes, incontinence

Xylazine poisoning: a systematic review

Noah S. Ball, Brittany M. Knable, Taylor A. Relich, Allyson N. Smathers, Michael R. Gionfriddo, Branden D. Nemecek, Courtney A. Montepara, Anthony J. Guarascio, Jordan R. Covvey & David E. Zimmerman

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Let's Talk Sedation!

- I don't just mean sleepy...
- I mean "can't move *at all* for hours"
- Position matters
- Also a fall risk!
 - Discourage standing when using
- Reported –
 - **Muscle damage**
 - **Nerve damage**
 - **Rhabdomyolysis**
- Harm reduction for xylazine must include watching out for others who are sedated, and moving them regularly!



Harm Reduction

- HR for **sedation**
 - Never use alone!
 - Sit or lay down when using
 - Watch out for your friends who are nodding (unconscious) longer than normal
 - *Make sure breathing and heart rate are adequate, and then –*
 - Don't allow people to nod in weird positions
 - Put people into the recovery position (ideally)
 - Roll from one side to the other every hour or so
 - Place padding under bony places – heels, hip, shoulder, ankles, etc.
 - Teach on signs/symptoms of rhabdomyolysis





Teamwork = Dreamwork

- We know very little about xylazine in humans, especially chronic use
- **We must work together**, share ideas, successes, and failures
- We will spend years waiting for bench research



I want to hear from you!

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