Socio-Demographic Characteristics and Treatment Experiences of People with Opioid Dependence in NSW, Australia: The NSW Opioid Dependence Survey

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Background

Opioid Agonist Treatment (OAT): OAT is a well-established, effective intervention for reducing the health and social harms associated with opioid dependence.

NSW's OAT Engagement: In 2023, New South Wales (NSW) reported the highest number of OAT recipients in Australia, with nearly 25,000 individuals in treatment.

Data Gaps: Despite extensive administrative data, detailed insights into the socio-demographic, psycho-social, and substance use factors affecting OAT engagement remain limited.

Survey Purpose: The NSW Opioid Dependence Survey was conducted to address these data gaps, offering a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing OAT engagement and providing insights for tailoring interventions to the needs of this population.

Aim

Describe the Cohort: Provide a comprehensive socio-demographic profile of individuals with opioid dependence in NSW.

Examine Factors by Treatment Group: Analyse the socio-demographic, substance use, and mental health factors associated with different levels of OAT engagement, including those currently receiving OAT, those who have previously received it, and those who have never engaged in OAT.

Describe Treatment Experiences: Detail the treatment experiences of participants, including their engagement with OAT, barriers to access, and overall satisfaction with the treatment received.

Methods

Study Design: Cross-sectional survey conducted from October 2023 to March 2024 across various sites in NSW, including needle syringe programs, treatment centers, pharmacies, and community organisations.

Participants: 405 adults with opioid dependence, including those currently or previously on OAT, and those using non-prescribed opioids or heroin.

Data Collection: Collected detailed information on socio-demographics, substance use patterns, mental health, and treatment experiences.

Analysis: Descriptive statistics and inferential analyses, including Chi-square tests and logistic regression, were used to identify factors associated with varying levels of OAT engagement.

Use heroin or non-prescribed opioids?

📞 0449 939 663

Participate in a survey and receive $40 AUD

UNSW Researchers are recruiting adults (18+) for a survey on opioid use & treatment. You may be able to take part if you:
1) use heroin or non-prescribed opioids **OR**
2) receive treatment for opioid use
Your feedback will help improve services for opioid dependence
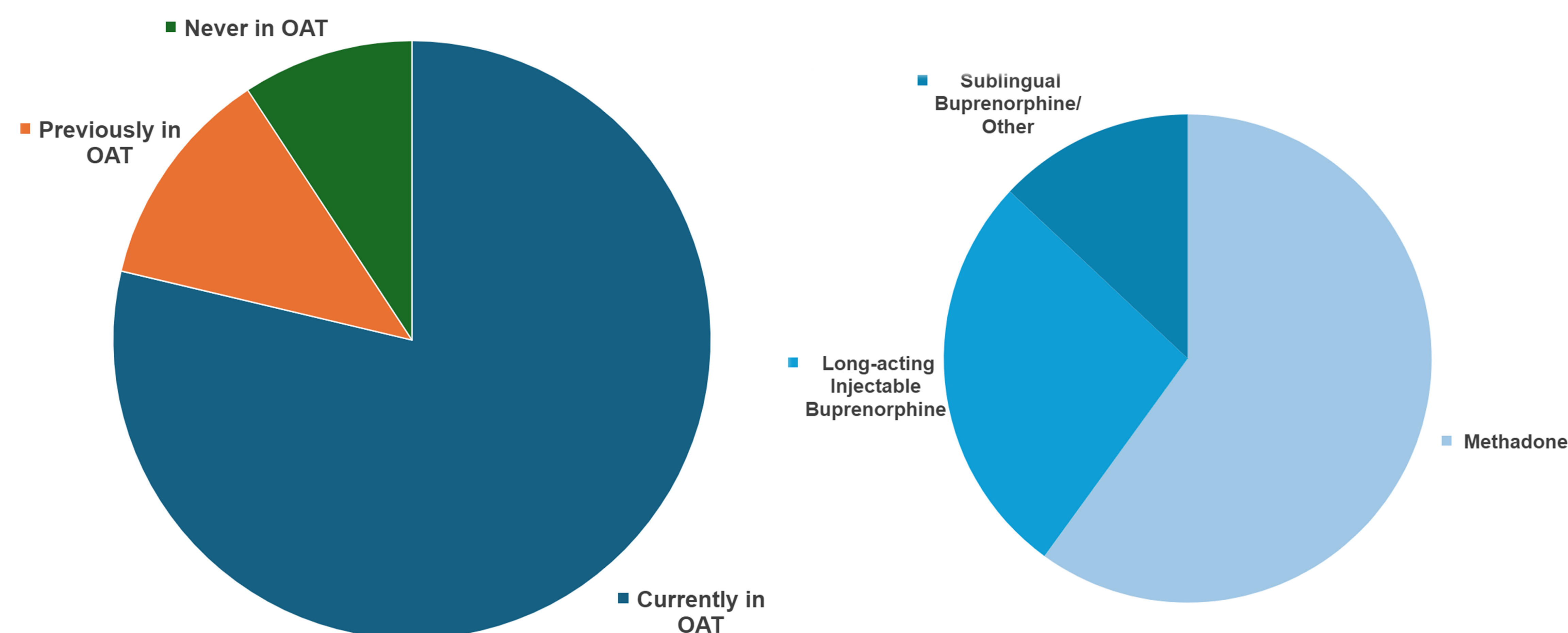
SCAN ME

To Participate:
1. Call us from Oct 9th to find out if you can take part
2. Complete a ~60 min interview in-person at an interview site in Sydney (Scan QR Code) **OR** schedule a video/phone call and receive $40!

📞 0449 939 663   ✉ odsurvey@unsw.edu.au

*If we can't complete the interview during your 1st call, we'll contact you up to 4 times to reschedule, opt out at anytime. Want to view our participant consent forms or have questions about the survey? Call or email us (above)

SVH HREC approval number: 2023/ETH01404
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Treatment status among NSW Opioid Dependence Survey participants

Results

Demographic Characteristics
- Mean age: 44 years; 64% male. 15% experienced homelessness. 84% were unemployed.

Substance Use Patterns
- 94% had injected drugs; 64% injected in past month.
- 61% used heroin in past month. 59% had overdosed; 10% overdosed in past six months.

Opioid Dependence Treatment
- 60% were receiving methadone OAT. 27% were on long-acting injectable buprenorphine.
- Last OAT dose received at public clinics (39%) or pharmacies (28%).

Mental Health and Trauma
- 35% had PTSD.
- 51% moderate to severe depression.
- 74% at least one ACE.

Conclusion

- **High Socio-economic Instability:** The study identifies substantial socio-economic challenges, with high unemployment and homelessness rates among the sample.

- **Prevalence of Mental Health Issues:** Significant mental health burdens were observed, including high rates of PTSD, depression, and childhood trauma.

- **Associations with OAT engagement:** In this sample, being out of treatment or never receiving OAT was associated with higher rates of homelessness and rates of concurrent substance use.

- **Need for Integrated Services:** The findings highlight the necessity for integrated harm reduction, mental health, and social support services tailored to the diverse needs of people with opioid dependence in NSW.

- **Future studies planned** with this data will more thoroughly examine factors associated with OAT engagement.

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