



ATTITUDES TOWARDS PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS AND KNOWLEDGE ABOUT NALOXONE USE AMONG STUDENTS IN THE MEDICAL SCIENCES

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BACKGROUND

- Recinto Pa’ la Calle (RPC), a student-led collective at the University of Puerto Rico Medical Sciences Campus, has served people who use drugs (PWUD) for over 10 years.
- We recently demonstrated that our annual workshop positively transformed participants’ perspectives about harm reduction, drug use, and homelessness.
- Given the importance of harm reduction training in eradicating stigma against PWUD and enhancing their access to medical services, we aimed to further investigate students’ attitudes towards PWUD and their knowledge of naloxone as a harm reduction tool beyond our annual workshops.

METHODOLOGY

- We conducted an anonymous online survey with 22 questions translated from two previously validated instruments: the **Medical Conditions Regard Scale (MCRS)** for Drug Use, and the **Naloxone-Related Risk Compensation Beliefs (NaRCC-B)** Scale.
- We then performed Kruskal-Wallis tests to compare rating responses based on the amount of previous RPC night round attendance.



RESULTS

- Six schools participated in the survey (**Figure 2**).
- The sample (N=77) was mainly composed of cisgender women (67.5%), with a median of 24 years of age, and with most responses from Medicine and Public Health (**Figure 3**).
- Attitudes towards PWUD were consistent among the students regardless of their field and attendance to RPC night rounds. On average, students viewed drug use as a medical condition and disagreed with negative statements about PWUD (**Figure 5**).
- However, there were slight differences in naloxone risk compensation beliefs. Students attending 3 or more RPC rounds showed less stigma (**Table 1**).

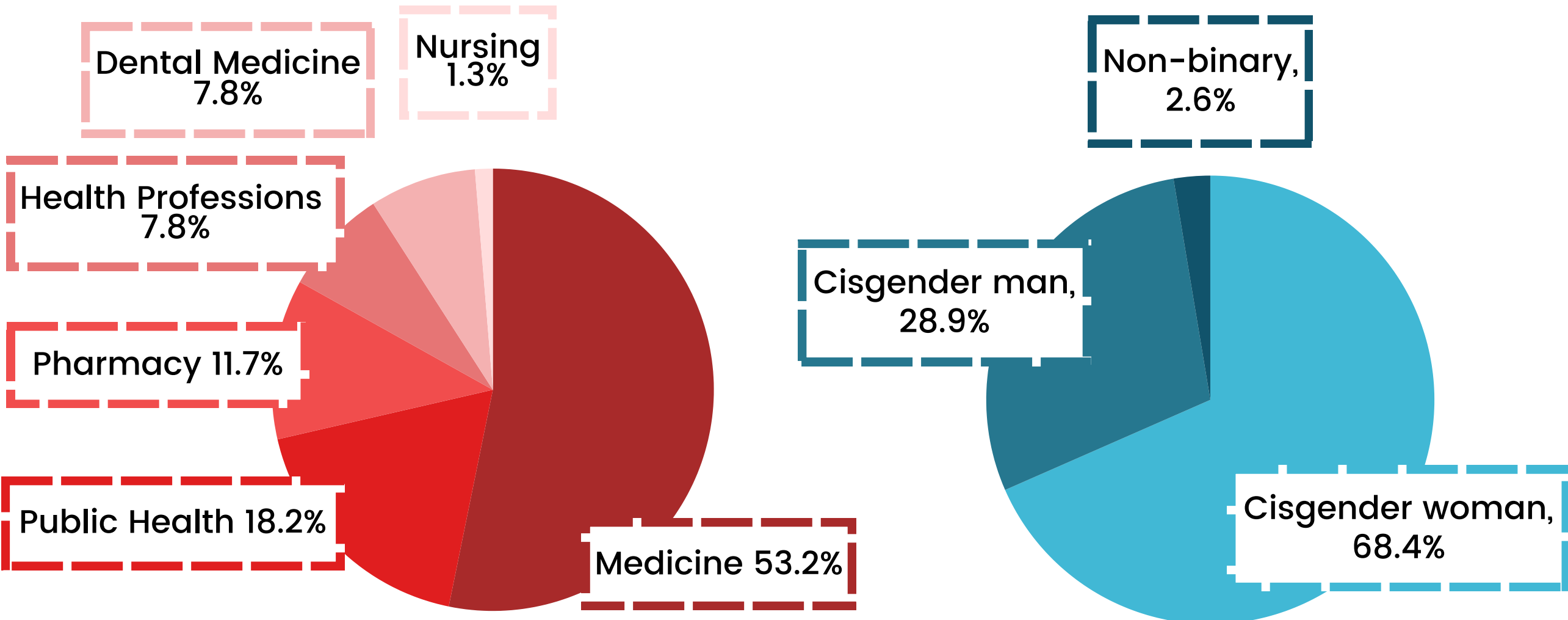


Figure 2 & 3. Distribution by school and gender among participants (N=77).

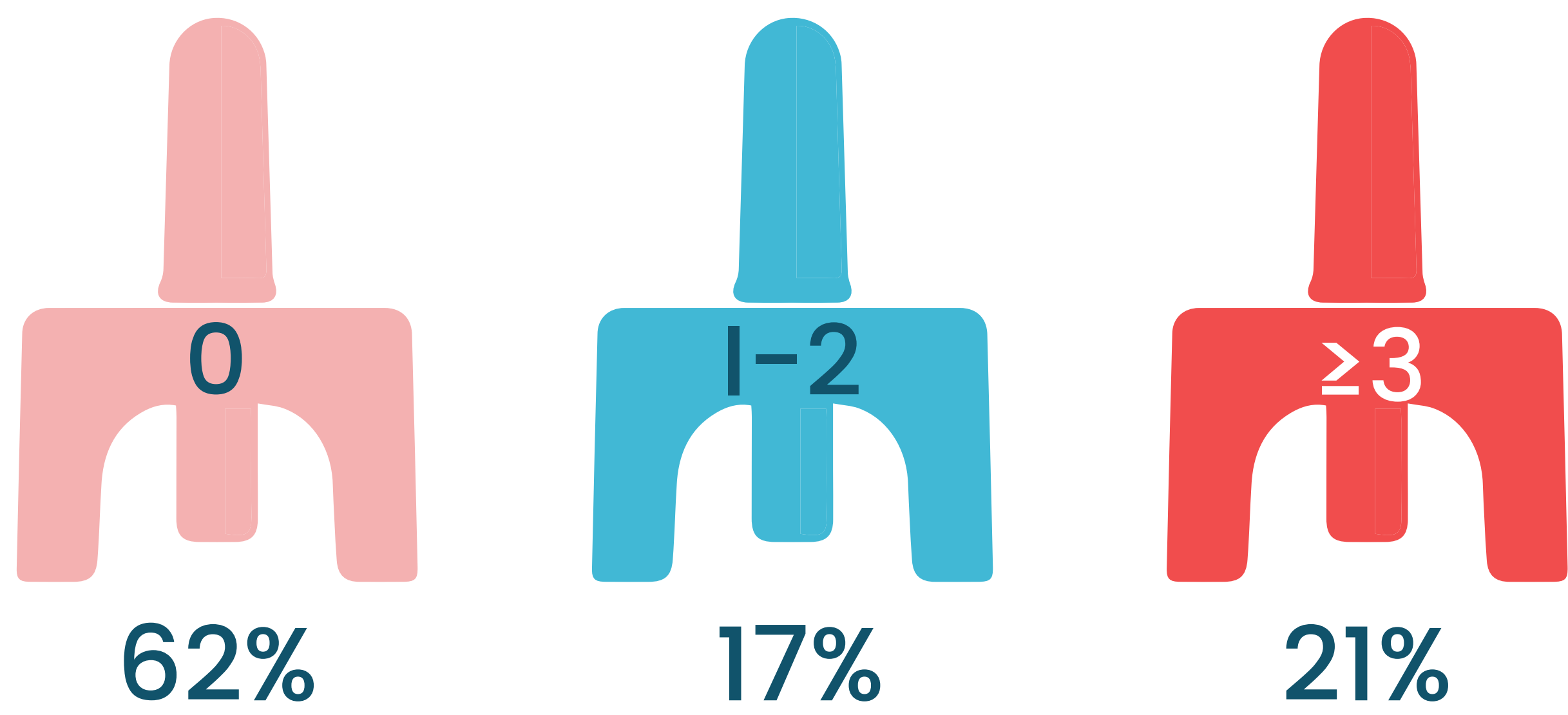


Figure 4. Previous RPC Night Round Participation in participants (N=77).

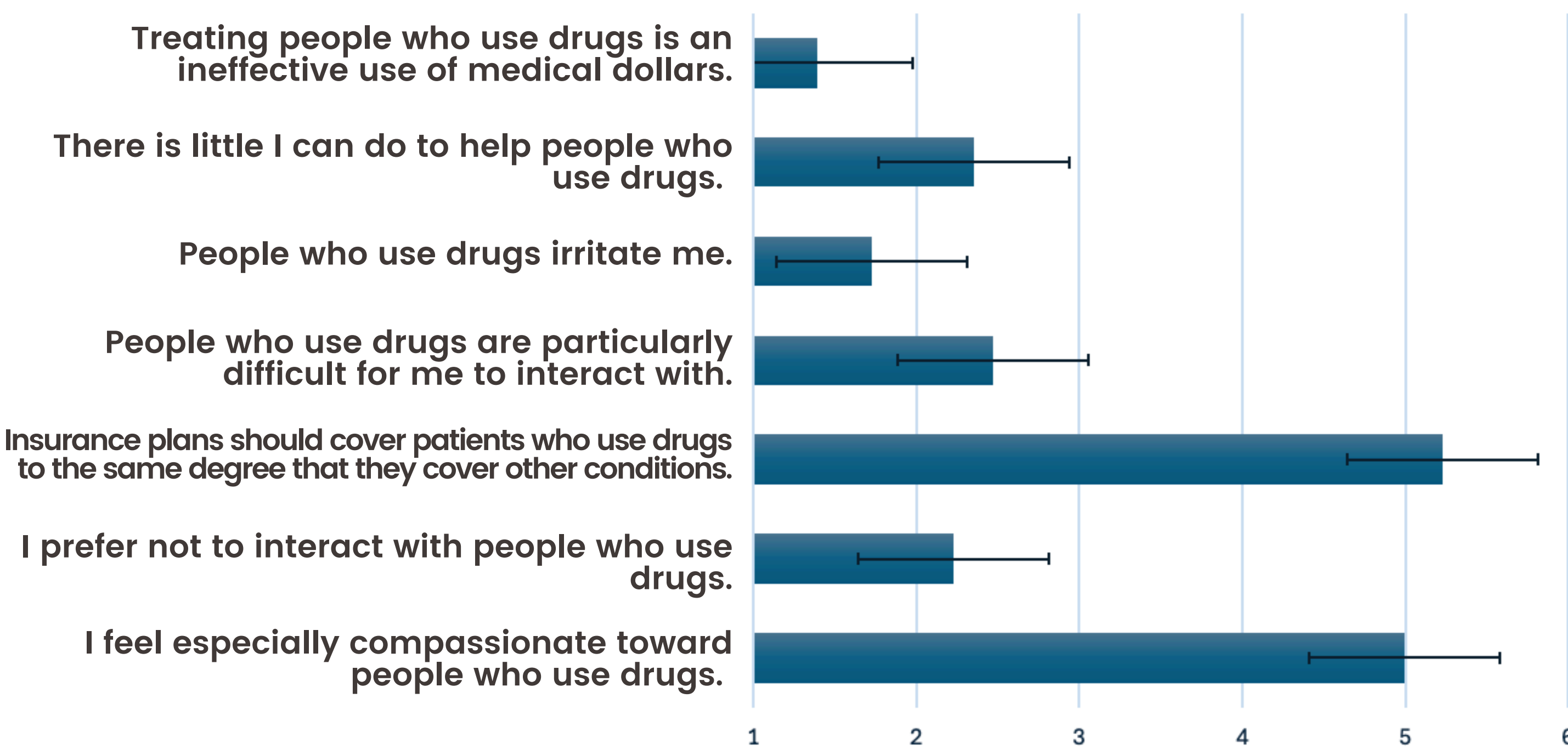


Figure 5. Average rating (±SEM) for each statement of the MCRS 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Not sure but probably disagree, 4=Not sure but probably agree, 5=Agree, 6=Strongly agree

Questions from the NaRCC-B Scale	Median ratings per RPC experience		
	No rounds	1-2 rounds	≥ 3 rounds
Naloxone is enabling for drug users.	2 (1, 4)	2 (1, 3)	1 (1, 3)
There should be a limit on the times a person receives naloxone to reverse overdose.	2 (1, 5)	1 (1, 2)	1 (1, 5)
Providing naloxone to overdose victims sends the message that I am condoning opioid misuse.	1 (1, 4)	1 (1, 3)	1 (1, 1)
People who use opioids will be less likely to seek out treatment if they have access to naloxone.	2 (1, 4)	2 (1, 4)	1 (1, 3)
Opioid users will use more opioids if they have access to naloxone.	2 (1, 4)	2 (1, 4)	1.5 (1, 3)

Table 1. Median ratings of the NaRCC-B Scale as per RPC experience 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither agree or disagree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree

CONCLUSIONS

- In our sample, graduate students at the medical sciences campus exhibited non-stigmatizing attitudes towards PWUD.
- However, differences in naloxone risk compensation beliefs highlighted knowledge gaps regarding harm reduction among students across health related fields.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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