

CHRONIC PAIN: INITIAL FINDINGS FROM A COHORT OF PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS IN MONTREAL, CANADA

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BACKGROUND

- Chronic pain (CP: intermittent or continuous pain lasting >3 months) is a prevalent problem among people who inject drugs (PWID)¹
- Estimates suggest that anywhere between 33%-49% of PWID report having CP²⁻³
- Literature concerning CP among PWID is limited
- Many PWID report barriers to CP medication access due to their substance use and stigma⁴
- Further characterization of the CP experience among PWID is needed to understand how we can help treat and manage CP among this population

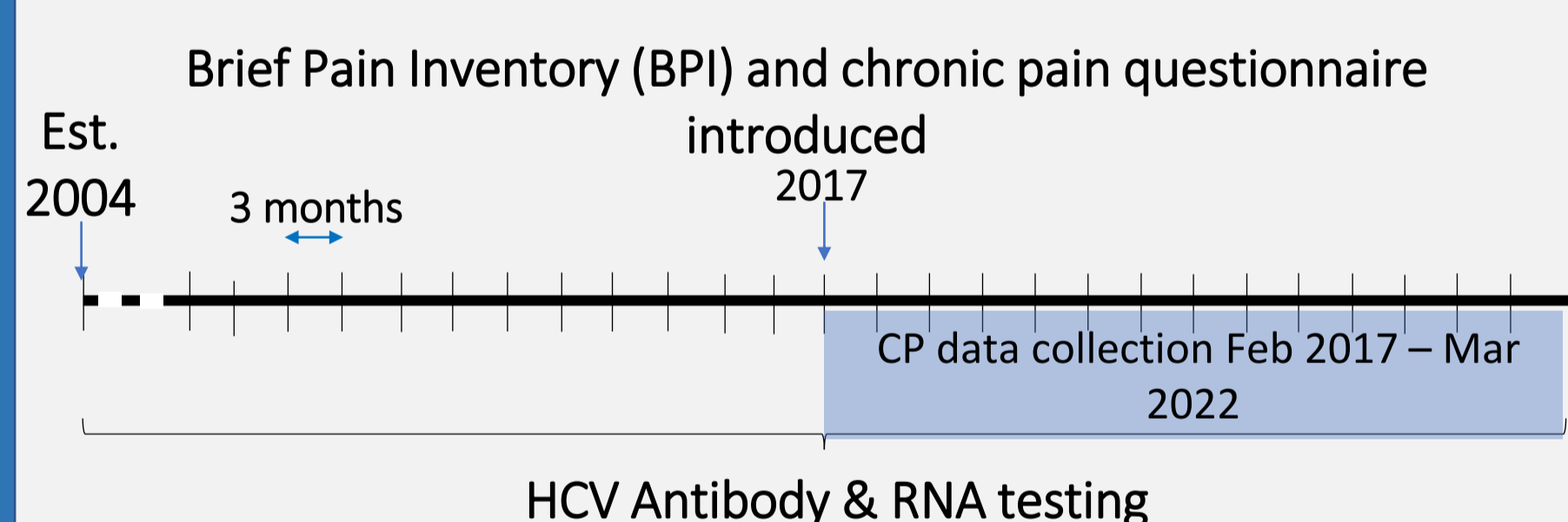
OBJECTIVES

- Characterize CP in a community-based cohort of PWID in Montreal, by gender, age, cause of pain, site of pain, and medication use for pain management.

STUDY DESIGN

- Sample comes from a Community-based cohort of PWID known as the **HEPatitis Cohort (HEPCO)**
- Eligibility:
 - Injection drug use (last 6 months)
 - Age 18+
 - Residence in Montreal

Figure 1. Study Design For CP Study



METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

- Data collected from 543 participants who completed the first chronic pain questionnaire between Feb 2017-Mar 2022

CHRONIC PAIN CHARACTERIZATION

- Using data collected from 252 participants reporting having CP
- Descriptive analyses of CP prevalence by age (<=40 vs >40) and gender
- Characterize primary causes of pain, site of pain, and prescription drug use for pain management

CHRONIC PAIN MEASURES

- Brief Pain Inventory: Validated instrument assessing the cause and location of pain (self-report)
- Prescription drug use for pain management (self-report)

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SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

Table 1. Sample characteristics of participants who completed CP questionnaire (n=543)

	N (%) or Median [IQR]
Age, years	45.0 [36.3-52.8]
Male gender ¹	454 (83.6)
Unstable housing ²	160 (29.5)
Recent incarceration ³	57 (10.5)
Opioid agonist treatment ³	223 (41.1)
Cocaine injection ²	199 (36.6)
Heroin injection ²	128 (23.6)
Prescription opioid injection ²	152 (28.0)

¹ Two participants reported their gender as "other"

² Past month ³ Past 3 months

PREVALENCE

252 participants reported having CP

- Total prevalence of chronic pain: 46%**

Figure 2. Prevalence Of CP By Gender And Age

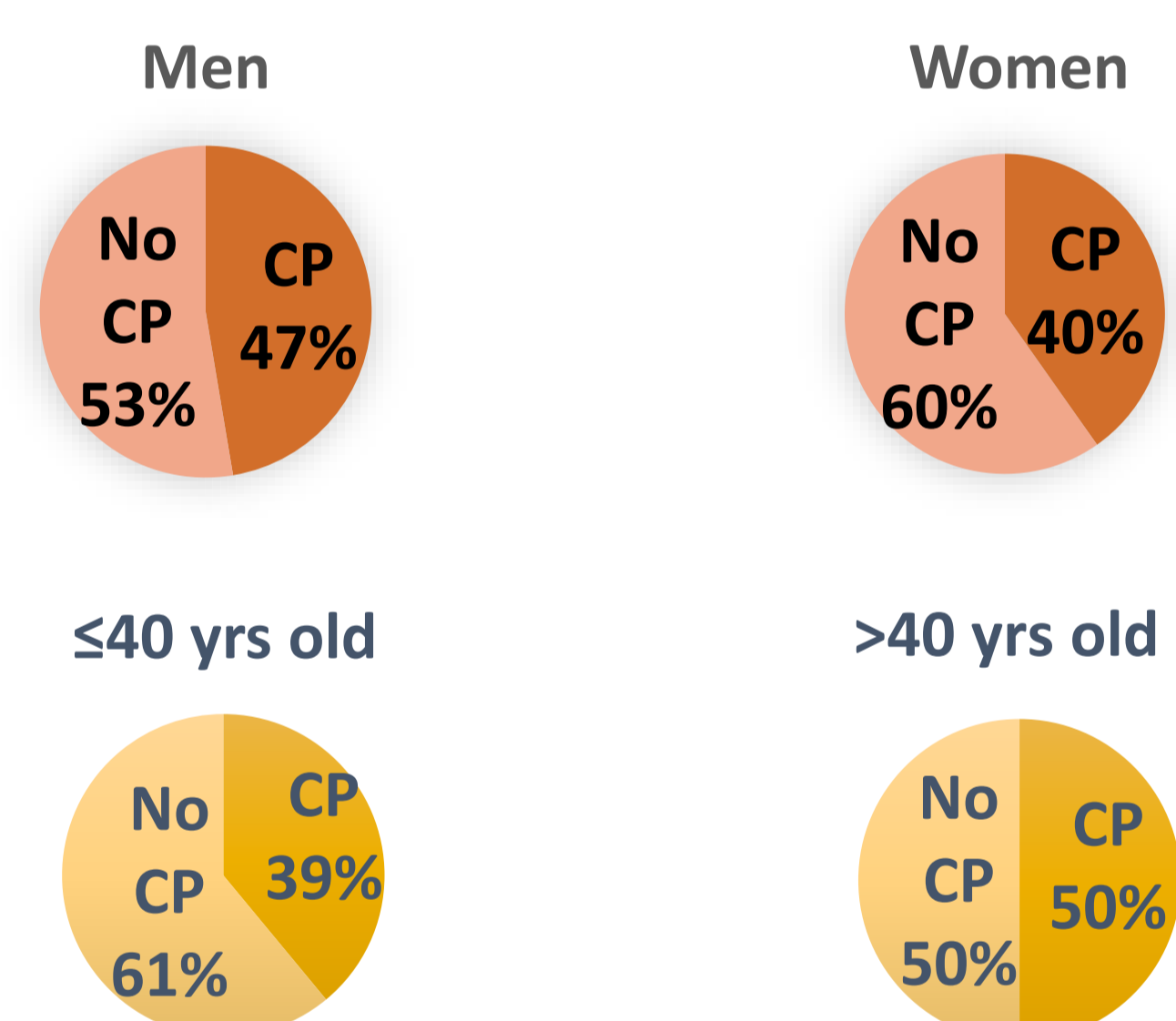


Figure 3. Primary Causes Of CP

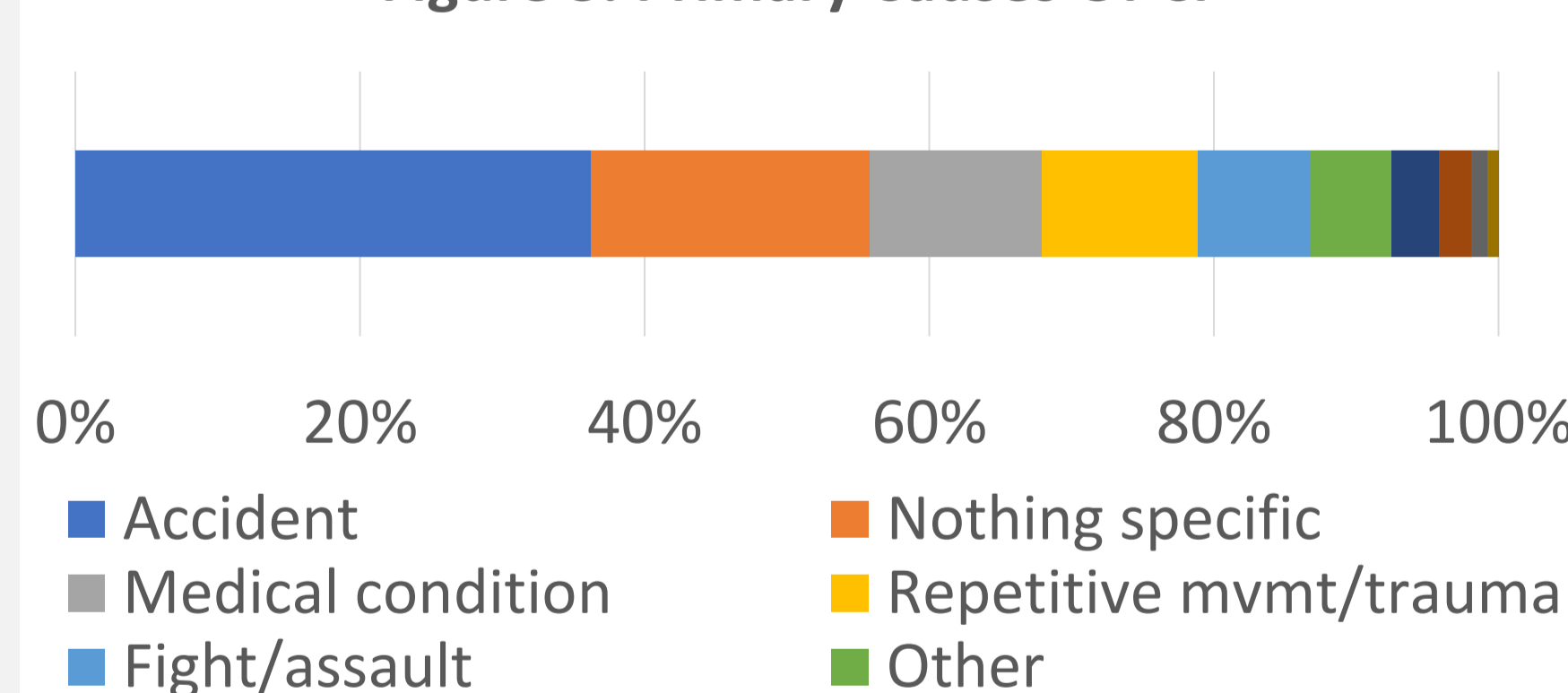
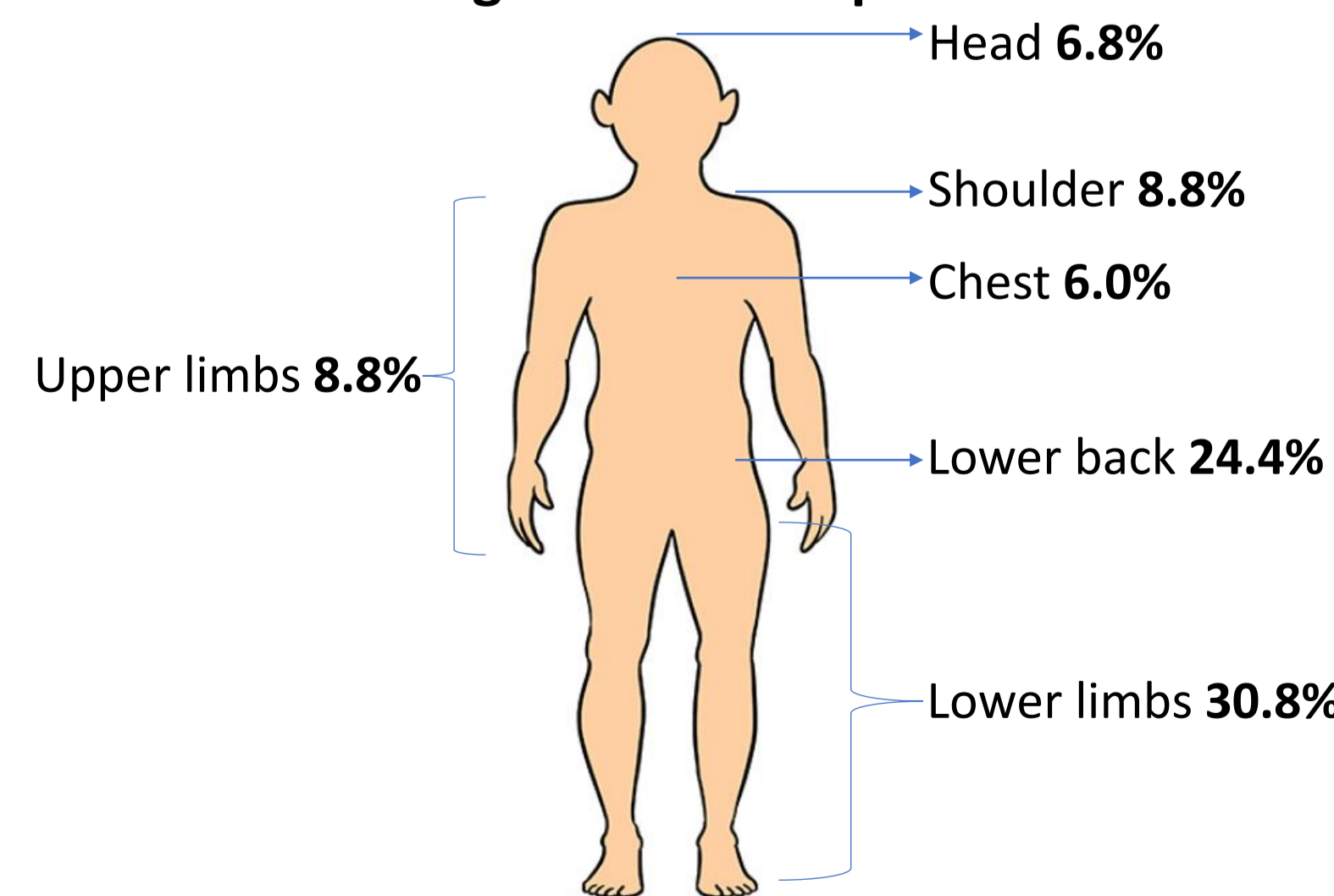


Figure 4. Site of pain

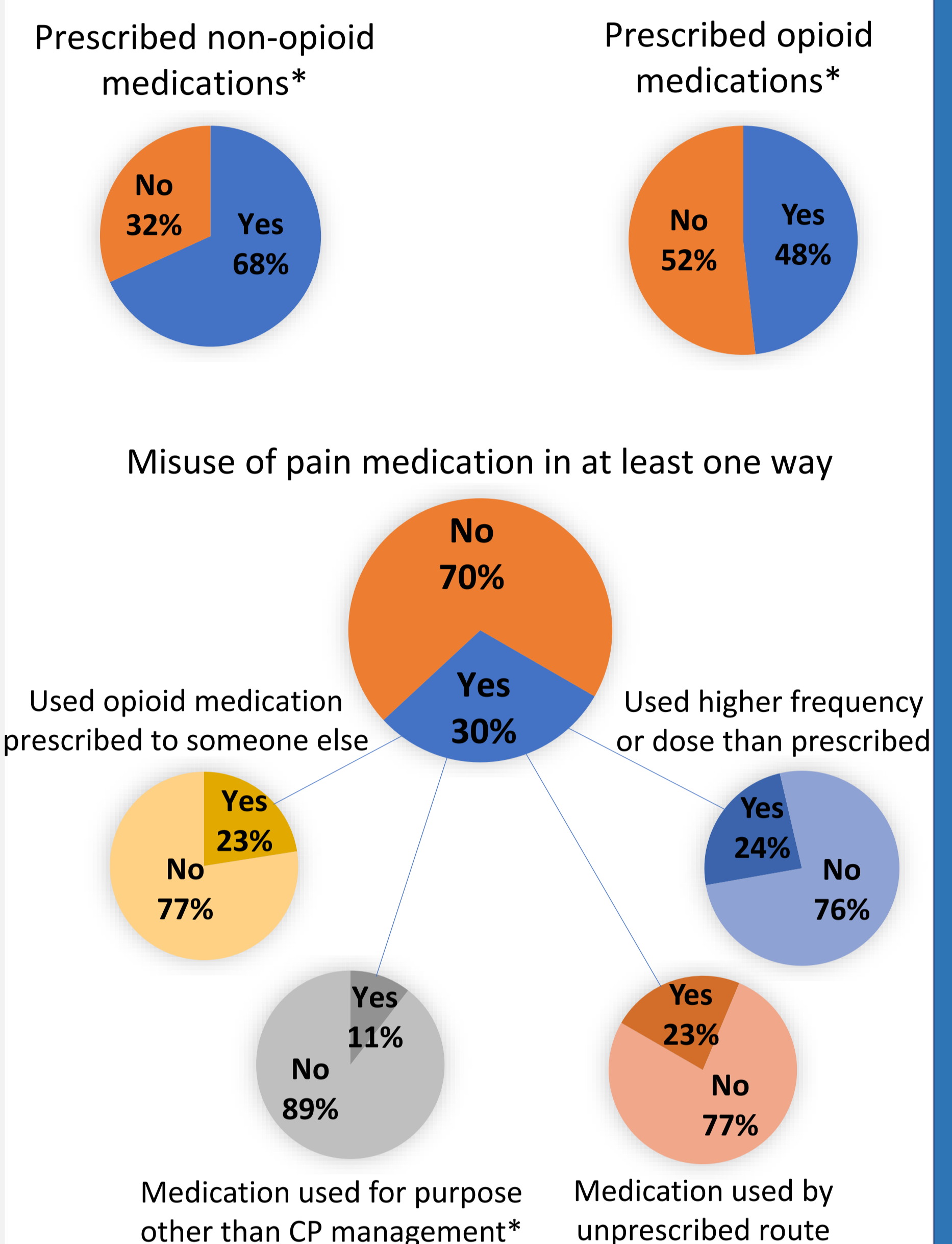


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- SU is a CanHepC Trainee. JB holds the Canada Research Chair in Addiction Medicine.

PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION USE

Figure 5. Prescription Medication Use Among Participants Reporting Chronic Pain (n=252)



* In the past 3 months

STRENGTHS

- This study provides information on the cause and site of CP, as well as prescription medication use specifically for pain management among PWID, which is rarely reported in the current literature

LIMITATIONS

- Convenient sample: using a pre-existing community-based cohort of PWID. Therefore the sample is not representative of all PWID.
- Self-report. No data available on the participant's medical and prescription history

CONCLUSIONS

- Chronic pain is common in this cohort of PWID and more frequently affects men and older participants, and is linked primarily to prior accidents
- Opioid and non-opioid medications are prescribed to help manage pain
- 70% of participants did not misuse their pain medication.
- These results indicate that although many PWID experience barriers to accessing pain medication, a majority of PWID do not misuse their prescribed pain medication.
- Need to further investigate medical and non-medical substance use for pain management to identify better treatment and management options for PWID living with CP