

Addiction-related characteristics of substance users in harm reduction programs: a systematic review

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Introduction

Harm reduction policy adopted to face HIV epidemic among people who inject drugs (PWID) has improved access of prevention and care but

- High prevalence of HCV was found and frequent risk behaviors → need to increase harm reduction program efficiency
- Harm reduction programs users are in excessive and problematic use, with many risk-practices
- In which extent their use is driven by addiction, craving, or other potential causalities ?
- Problematic substance users who attend harm reduction programs have not been fully studied from the perspective of characterizing substance use disorder, endorsed diagnostic criteria, and the role of craving in their use

Objective

The objective of this literature review was to assess the prevalence of:

- Substance Use Disorder (SUD) diagnoses
 - Frequency and intensity of craving
- Among active substances users in harm reduction programs

Methods

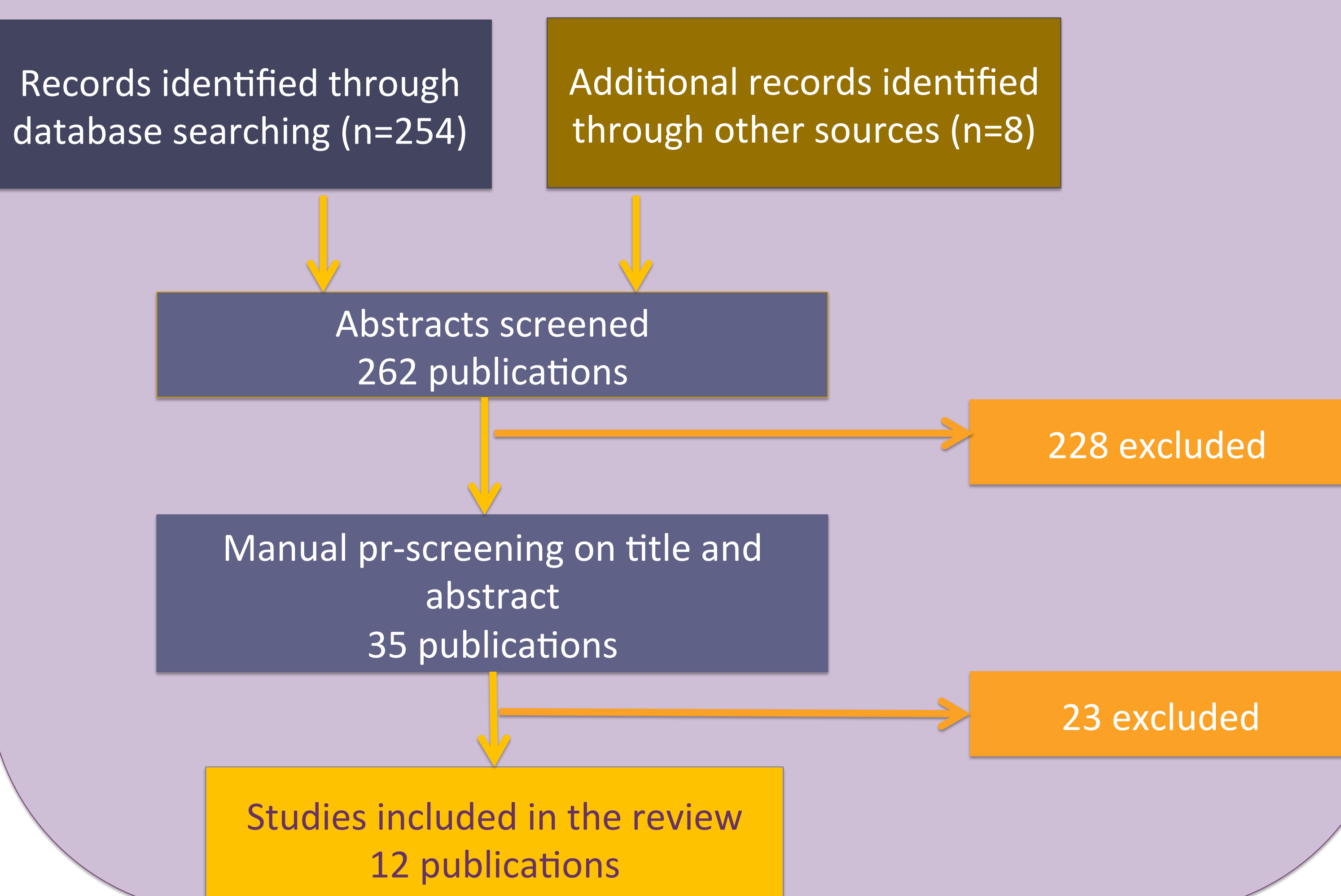
Systematic review of the literature: PubMed database up to march, 15

Criteria for considering studies

- **Type of studies:** including problematic substance users attending Needle Exchange Programs, Supervised Injecting Facilities, harm reduction programs
- **Type of participants:** included subjects reporting any substance use

Search method and selection of studies

Terms (((((((("Supervised") OR "safer")) AND (((("injection") OR "injecting") OR "shooting") OR "consumption"))) AND (((((facility) OR facilities) OR room) OR gallery) OR center) OR site))) OR "Needle-Exchange Programs"[Mesh]) OR Harm reduction)) were combined with the terms (((("Mental Disorders/diagnosis"[Mesh]) OR "Craving"[Mesh]) OR craving)



Results

Search results

9 examined the diagnosis of SUD and 3 craving

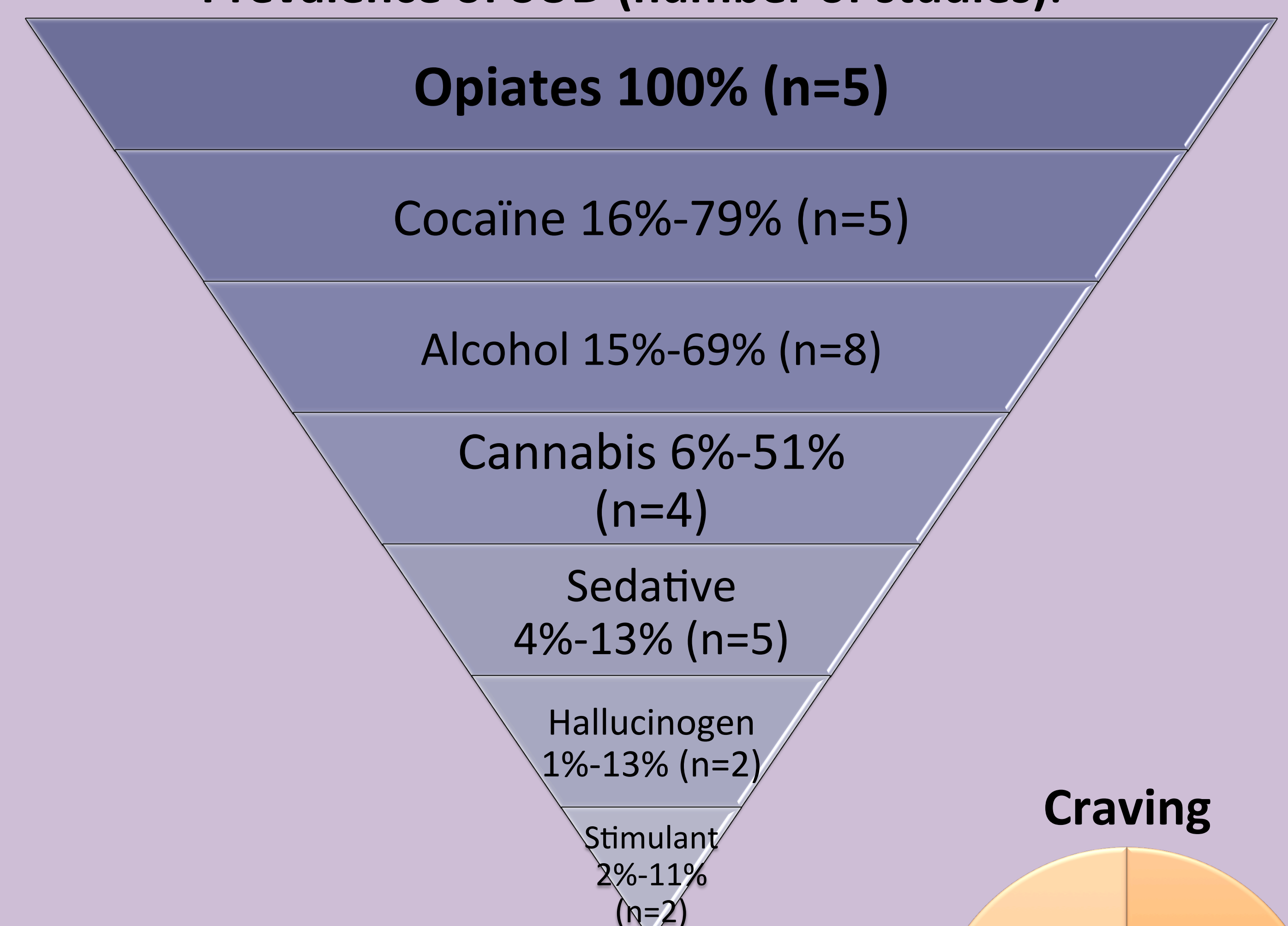
Characteristics of sample

- n= 1852 different participants Sample size : range 80-570
- Studies included adult or young adults
- Majority of males (range: 60% to 72.8%)

Substance Use Disorder diagnoses

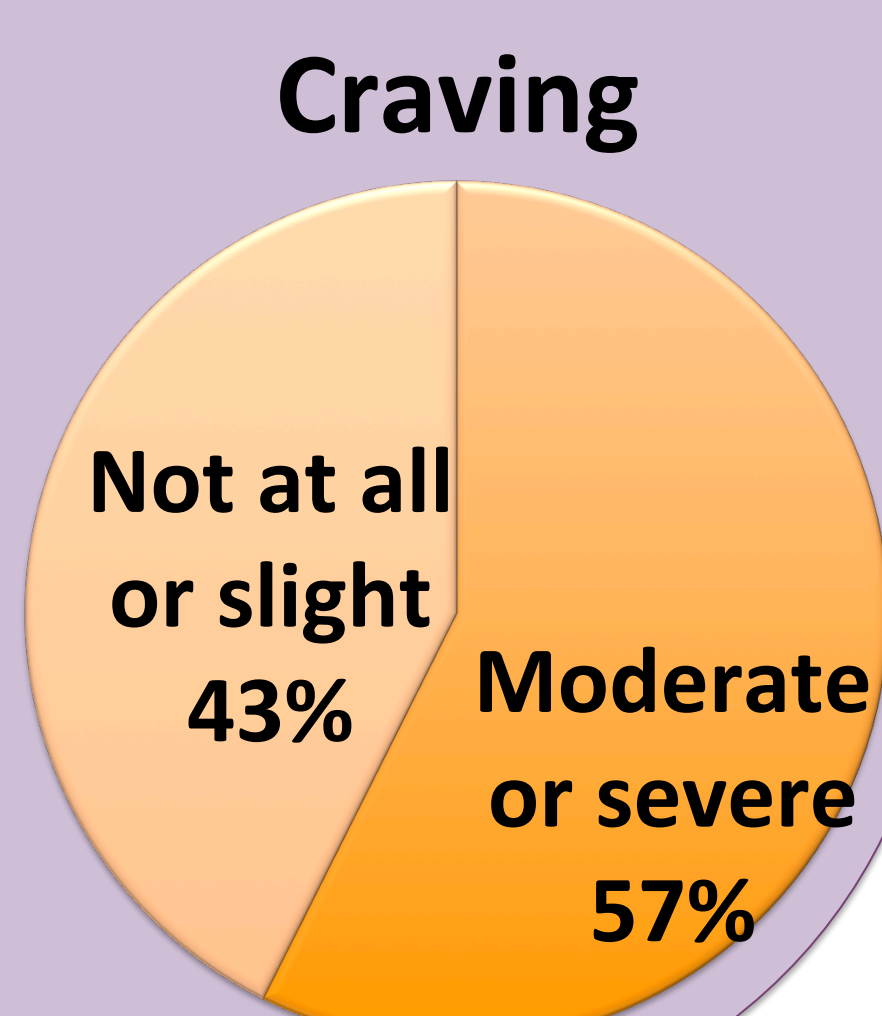
- **Diagnosis tools:** 2 used the DSM-III-R and 7 used the DSM-IV
- Poly-substances 37% to 44%; Average of 3.3 lifetimes SUD and 1.3 current SUD

Prevalence of SUD (number of studies):



Frequency and intensity of craving

2 studies showed the implication of craving in at-risk practices :probability of sharing increased as craving increased



Conclusion

- In this review, **high prevalence of SUD** diagnosis and poly-addiction suggested that excess of use is motivated by a **loss of control**, characteristic of addiction, and not a mode of voluntary use without addiction
- **Few studies have assessed craving**
- It seems that among NEP users, **craving was associated with HIV risk practices**: need of taking into account craving in harm reduction efforts
- The lack of data on SUD diagnostic criteria and craving among users of NEP, may be an important omission in efforts to enhance the individual and public health benefits of harm reduction programs

