

# Illinois Pharmacist Survey on Non-Prescription Syringe Sales and the Sharps Container Program

## Key Findings, Recommendations, and Next Steps



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# Background...

- **2003:** IL Syringe Purchase Law passed
- Permits purchase and possession of 20 syringes by 18+
- **2004:** UIC assessed pharmacists' awareness of law and attitudes
- **2004:** AFC/IDPH Syringe access & disposal program
- **2007-2008:** Repeated 2004 survey with five new questions

## You Can Buy Syringes Without a Prescription

It is legal for pharmacies to sell, and adults age 18 and over to possess, 20 syringes without a prescription.

Pharmacists are NOT required to report or keep records of syringe sales, but may ask for proof of age. Syringe sales through pharmacies became legal on July 25, 2003 through IL Public Act 093-0392.

*Having trouble buying syringes?* Ask your pharmacist to call the AIDS Foundation of Chicago: 312-922-2322 x395.

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## Survey Questions Included...

- Knowledge of legal issues, store policy, and pharmacy board regulations
- Attitudes and opinions on
  - Syringe access as prevention
  - Business concerns for selling
  - Non-prescription purchasing
  - Home and store disposal of used syringes
  - Result of selling syringes to IDUs
  - Provision of education and referrals
  - Influence of fellow pharmacists and pharmacy orgs
- Sales practices
- Demographics of pharmacists, pharmacies, customers



## Methodology...

- Survey mailed to pharmacy managers and senior pharmacists at 602 IL pharmacies
  - Approximately 26% of all IL pharmacies
  - Chicago, suburban Chicagoland, high-risk counties, and rural areas
  - 66% overall response rate
  - Final sample=379
    - Included only complete surveys by commercial/non-hospital pharmacies



## Pharmacists' Attitudes...

### Sterile Syringes=Disease Prev

- More than 80% of respondents related to difficulty of quitting drug use.
- Nearly 54% agreed that selling syringes to IDUs will prevent HIV and HCV.
- 30% remain concerned that syringe access would increase drug use, similar to '04.





## Pharmacists' Attitudes... Non-Prescription Purchase

- **95%** aware of syringe purchase law (77% in '04).
- **13% increase** in number of pharmacists willing to sell syringes ('04-51%; '07-64%).
- **72%** require ID, name, address, sobriety, etc. before selling.
  - **15% increase** from '04.
- **79%** report selling syringes w/o prescription.
- **77%** report customers requesting syringes.

# Pharmacists' Attitudes...

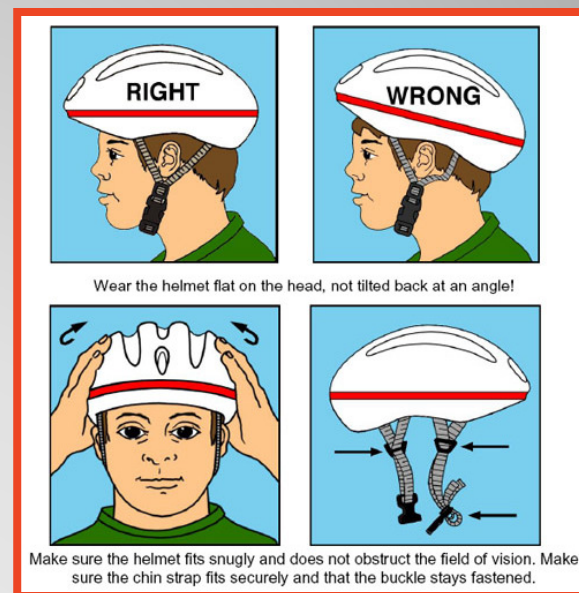
## Unwillingness to Sell

- More than 30% unwilling to sell syringes. Why?
  - Belief that syringe access:
    - Increases drug use
    - Doesn't prevent HIV or HCV
    - Doesn't reduce needle sharing
  - Geographic location:
    - Suburban Chicago pharmacists=2.4 times more likely to sell syringes than Chicago counterparts
  - Corporate vs. independent pharmacy
    - Among the 33 pharmacies that did not allow sales of syringes, 82% were independent



# Pharmacists Attitudes... Harm Reduction

- Pharmacists--Partners in Harm Reduction
- Most respondents reported willingness to provide information on:
  - Injection-related infections (87%)
  - Drug overdose (81%)
  - Proper disposal of syringes (90%)
  - Provide referrals to drug treatment (85%)
  - Safer injection practices (58%)



# Syringe Disposal Findings

- 43% of IL pharmacies are enrolled in Sharps Container Program.
  - Only 29% say they are enrolled.
- Approximately 25% of pharmacists surveyed expressed willingness to dispose of used syringes.
  - (Consistent with '04.)
- 8% increase in willingness to have in-store disposal kiosks
  - (55% v. 47%).



# Pharmacists' Comments...



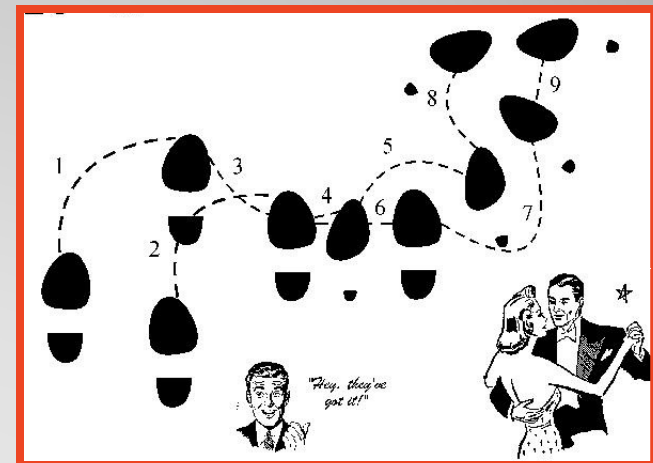
- 13 respondents suggested that state or federal government fund disposal sites or programs.
- 10 pharmacists expressed disagreement or disapproval of non-prescribed syringe sales or the syringe disposal program.
- 20 respondents requested more information and education for pharmacists.

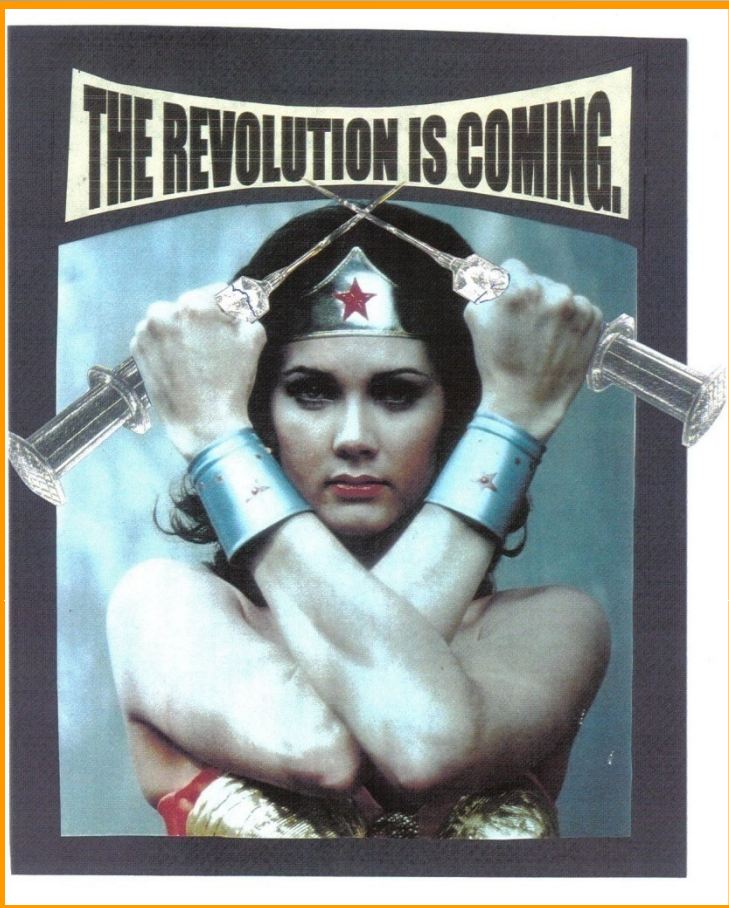
# Conclusions and Recommendations...

- Significant progress has been made since 04, but much remains to do.
- Pharmacists' attitudes and assumptions about drug users influence decisions to sell syringes.
- Important to help pharmacists see IDUs as interested and willing to adopt health seeking behaviors.
- Tie disposal efforts to the needs of diabetics.
- Explore addition of public syringe disposal at pharmacies that already handle hazardous waste.

## Next Steps...

- Revise educational insert
- Continue to utilize teachable moments
- Target outreach
- Continue broad pharmacy education
- Sustain consumer education
- Facilitate connection and communication between pharmacies and NEPs





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