



SB 6 – Use of Xylazine Prevention Act

Regulating xylazine accessibility and preventing misuse

SUMMARY

SB 6 adds xylazine, also known as “tranq” or the “zombie drug,” to the list of Schedule III controlled substances. This schedule allows California to restrict access to this drug, while also protecting its intended use in veterinary medicine.

BACKGROUND

Xylazine is a non-opiate sedative, painkiller, and muscle relaxant authorized only for veterinary use. Xylazine is used for short-term sedation and pain management in horses, cattle, and exotic animals.⁶ Xylazine allows veterinarians to calm an animal, perform minor surgeries, and conduct testing. The use of this drug enables a veterinarian to safely interact with and handle an animal, preventing injury to both themselves and the animal.

Although xylazine is not approved for human use, its presence has been detected in many states, including California.¹ According to a DEA Joint Intelligence Report published in October 2022, xylazine-related deaths are increasing drastically in every region of the nation, more than tripling from 2020 to 2021.¹

Xylazine use is associated with sores, severe wounds, and infections, and can lead to amputation or fatal overdose.¹ Xylazine is called the “zombie drug” because it causes extreme sedation, slow breathing, and severe skin ulcers that can lead to rotting flesh, giving users a zombie-like appearance.⁷

Additionally, users may develop a physical dependence to xylazine, with some reporting withdrawal symptoms as or more severe than those from heroin or meth.¹

THE PROBLEM

Xylazine is increasingly found in the illicit drug supply, and is used as an additive for other opioids to increase profits. Xylazine is spreading rapidly due to several factors, including cost-cutting, its addictive

nature, and its ability to extend the duration and amplify the high of an opioid, such as fentanyl, with which it is combined.⁷ The combination of xylazine and fentanyl places users at a higher risk of a fatal drug overdose.⁴ Xylazine overdoses closely resemble opioid overdoses but are often not detected in routine drug screening tests.³

Unlike opioid overdoses, naloxone, commonly known as “Narcan,” cannot reverse a xylazine overdose, making this one of the **deadliest drug combinations in the United States. Currently, there is no approved treatment to counteract the effects of xylazine on humans.**³ This dangerous combination has been linked to a growing number of overdose deaths across the country.

Most troubling is how easy it is to obtain. While it is legitimately available through pharmaceutical distributors and veterinary websites, it is also easily purchased online by non-veterinary customers. A kilogram of xylazine powder can be purchased online for as little as \$6¹, making it an accessible and inexpensive option for not only drug traffickers, **but also anyone with web access, putting youth at risk.**

THE SOLUTION

SB 6 will prevent the human use of xylazine by classifying it as a Schedule III substance while establishing guardrails to ensure its safe use in veterinary medicine. This bill contains an exemption that will allow compounding pharmacies to produce xylazine, under FDA guidelines, for veterinary use in the event of a supply shortage.

It is crucial that we protect Californians from the negative impacts of xylazine, and SB 6 ensures the health and safety of our communities by regulating its availability and preventing its misuse.

¹ DEA Joint Intelligence Report - The Growing Threat of Xylazine

² CA Department of Public Health - Xylazine Public Health Notice

³ Center for Disease Control - Xylazine Overdose Prevention

⁴ CA Department of Public Health - Opioid Crisis

⁵ Xylazine - Overdose Cases on the Rise

⁶ Science Direct – Xylazine

⁷ NIH - Xylazine Toxicity

SUPPORT

Mayor of San Diego, Todd Gloria (sponsor)
California Veterinary Medicine Association
California Narcotic Officers Association
League of California Cities
California Pharmacists Association
San Diego County District Attorney's Office
California District Attorney's Association
California Police Chiefs Association
California State Sheriff's Association

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