



Trends in Pharmacy Compounding for Women's Health in North Carolina: A Focus on Vulvodynia



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BACKGROUND

The Safe Drug Compounding Act of 2007 threatens to adversely affect many patients who rely on compounded medications to treat medical conditions for which no adequate commercially manufactured medication is available. Currently, no standard treatment for vulvodynia exists and many women rely on compounded medications to control the symptoms of this complex condition. In order to better understand the importance of compounding pharmacies in the provision of women's health services and to identify trends in compounding for vulvodynia, we developed an online survey with the assistance of the University of North Carolina's Odum Institute. The survey was distributed to compounding pharmacies across North Carolina.

Our a priori hypothesis was that many areas of women's health, specifically vulvo-vaginal disorders, rely heavily on compounding pharmacies and the services they provide.

OBJECTIVE

To establish the prevalence of medications compounded for women's health issues across North Carolina. To identify trends in compounding for vulvodynia, with particular emphasis on the types and combinations of medications used.

METHODS

The study began July 1, 2007 and concluded December 31, 2007. A list of registered pharmacies in North Carolina was obtained from the North Carolina Board of Pharmacy. Since the study focused on compounding pharmacies we initially excluded 1020 chain pharmacies. The remaining 1284 pharmacies were contacted via telephone to determine eligibility. Pharmacies that stated they compound medications were sent an invitation to complete an online survey, which consisted of demographic-type questions as well as questions designed to gain information regarding medications compounded for women's health, and more specifically, vulvodynia.

RESULTS

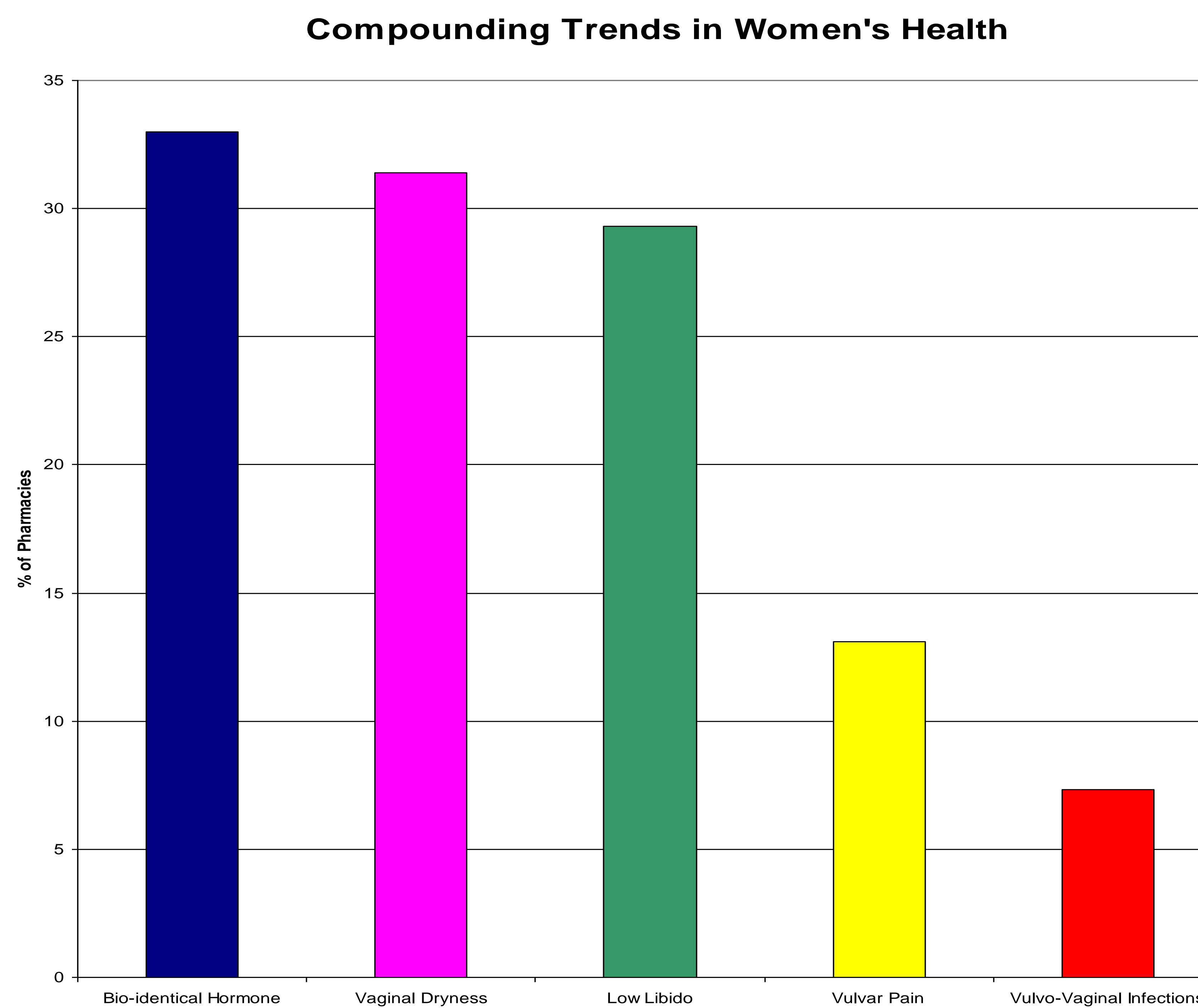


Fig. 1: Percentage of pharmacies compounding medications for women's health issues.

- Strengths of estradiol used in compounding preparations varied from 0.005% to 0.06%, with 0.01% being the most common strength (5.8%, n = 11).
- The most common medication used for vulvar pain was lidocaine (7.9%, n=15), followed by estradiol, estriol, and testosterone (6.8%, n=13).
- The most common base used for compounding was emollient cream (5.2%, n = 10), followed by petrolatum (4.7%, n = 9) and acid mantle (4.2%, n = 8)

- 1157 pharmacies in North Carolina stated they compound medications, thus meeting the inclusion criteria for study participation. Of these, 16.5% (n = 191) completed the survey.
- 45% (n = 86) of pharmacies compound medications for women's health issues, ranking third behind ENT (81%) and dermatology (71%).
- 13.09% (n = 25) of pharmacies compound medications for vulvar pain.
- Medications for vaginal dryness were compounded by 31.41% (n = 60) of pharmacies.
- The most common reason cited by pharmacies (43.98%, n = 84) for compounding medications was the "combination of medications not commercially available."

Strengths of Estradiol Commonly Used in Compounding Medications for Vulvar Pain

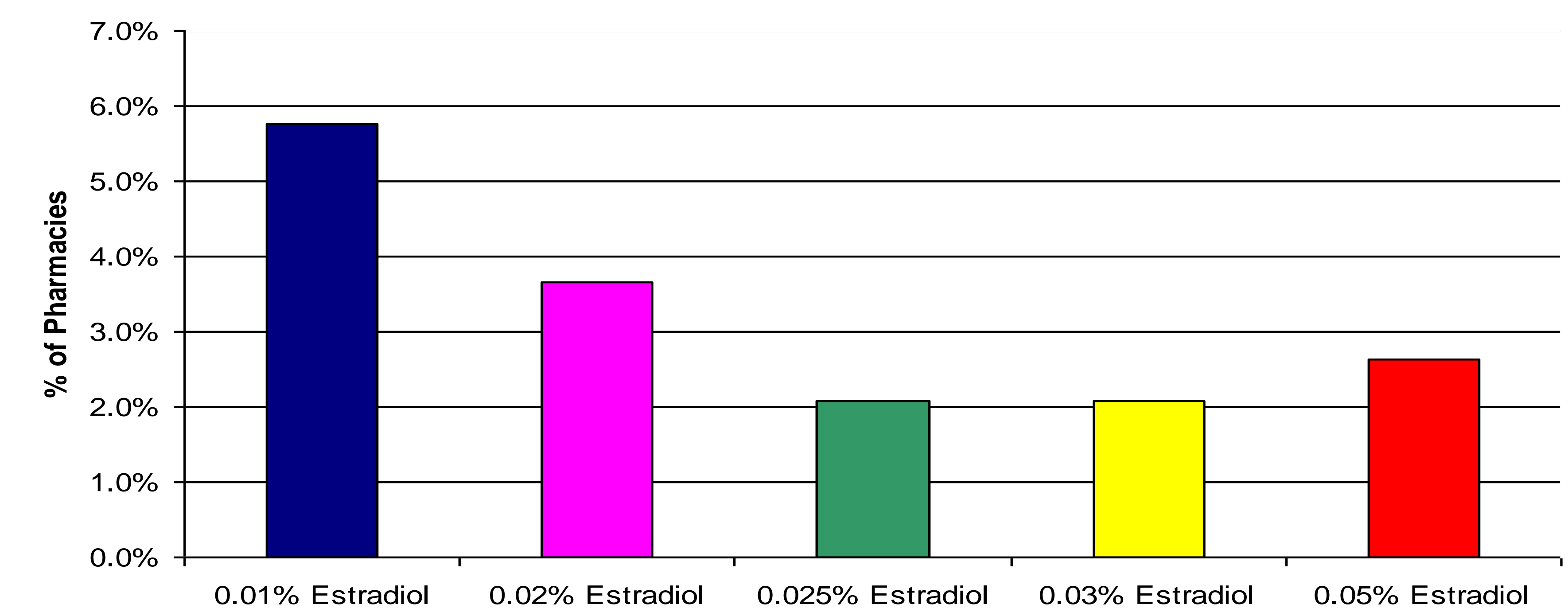


Fig. 2 : Strengths of estradiol commonly used in compounding medications for vulvodynia

CONCLUSION

Compounding pharmacies play a critical role in compounding medications that are not commercially available for disorders without consensus treatment, such as vulvodynia. Women's health issues are the third leading reason for compounding medications, with 13.09% (n = 25) of pharmacies compounding medications for vulvar pain.