Crystal methamphetamine use among gay and bisexual men in Australia

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Aims

• Examine trends in methamphetamine use in Gay Community Periodic Surveys (GCPS)
• Describe characteristics of men who use crystal in GCPS and context of use among men in GBM Hep C Survey

Methamphetamine use in Australia (NDSHS)

Methamphetamine forms (NDSHS)

Methamphetamine purity (VIC)
Methamphetamine cost (VIC)

Figure 1: Average price [Melbourne Injection Drug User Cohort (MIDUS) study and per gram] adjusted price [MIDUS] price adjusted by average Victorian Royalty Revenue Services Department (ARRS) tasters per gram of heroin and methamphetamine January 2009 to July 2014.

AOD treatment services in Australia

Figure 4.1: Closed episodes provided for own drug use, by selected principal drug of concern, 2005-06 to 2013-14.

Design and methods

- GCPS are repeated, cross-sectional surveys of gay men conducted in six states/territories annually or biennially (n~7000 annually)
- Conducted face-to-face at gay community events/venues, SOPVs, clinics. Online recruitment introduced in 2014
- GCPS data on recent (any) and regular (at least monthly) use of crystal and speed during 2005-14
- Trend analyses stratified by HIV status and survey location (2015 data available for Syd/Melb)
GCPS sample characteristics

- Valid responses from 70,732 men (2005-14)
- Mean age 36 years (\(p\)-trend < .001)
- 88% gay, 7% bisexual, 5% heterosexual/unspecified
- 67% Anglo-Australian (\(p\)-trend < .001)
- 67% full-time employed (\(p\)-trend < .001)
- 49% completed university degree
- 9% HIV-positive, 76% HIV-negative, 15% untested/unknown
- 80% recruited from gay events/venues, 12% SOPVs, 6% clinics, 1% online (\(p\)-trend = .001)

Any speed use in past 6 months by HIV status, 2005-14 (GCPS)

Any crystal use in past 6 months by HIV status, 2005-14 (GCPS)

Any crystal use in past 6 months by HIV status and survey location, 2005-14 (GCPS)

Regular crystal use in past 6 months by HIV status, 2007-14 (GCPS)

Injecting drug use among men who used crystal by HIV status, 2005-14 (GCPS)
Covariates of crystal use, 2014 (GCPS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Covariate</th>
<th>Less than monthly use (ref. no use)</th>
<th>At least monthly use (ref. less than monthly use)</th>
<th>Adjusted OR (95% CI)</th>
<th>Adjusted OR (95% CI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIV-positive</td>
<td>1.9 (1.4-2.7)***</td>
<td>not significant (ns)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STI diagnosis in past 12m</td>
<td>1.4 (1.0-1.8)*</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condolless sex with casual partners^</td>
<td>1.4 (1.1-1.8)^</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Used party drugs for sex^</td>
<td>5.7 (4.5-7.2)***</td>
<td>1.8 (1.1-2.6)**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injected drugs^</td>
<td>7.1 (4.8-10.4)***</td>
<td>2.3 (1.6-3.2)***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used amyl nitrite^</td>
<td>1.9 (1.5-2.4)***</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used erectile dysfunction meds^</td>
<td>2.1 (1.6-2.7)***</td>
<td>ns</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used GHB^</td>
<td>7.5 (5.6-10.1)***</td>
<td>2.2 (1.6-3.0)***</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^Refers to past 6 months.

GBM Hep C Survey, 2013

- Online survey conducted nationally (n=474)
- Targeted recruited of PWID (30% ever; 15% in past 6 months)

Among men who injected in past 6 months (n=71):
- 76% most commonly injected crystal; 8% speed
- 90% had injected in sexual contexts
- 85% had injected crystal in sexual contexts; 21% speed
- 8% reported receptive sharing of needle / syringe
- 38% reported receptive sharing other equipment
- Sharing more common among those who recently injected in sexual contexts (OR=3.2)

Limitations and strengths

- Community-based, mostly urban sample
- GCPS does not include detailed questions on illicit drug use, SUD, harm reduction practices, HIV treatment compliance
- One of few surveys internationally routinely collecting data on drug use among gay men
- Most reliable estimates of drug use among gay men available in Australia

Conclusions

- Crystal use declined during 2005-14 and increased during 2010-14, and approaching previous peak levels among HIV-positive men
- Regular crystal use declined during 2005-14 and remained stable during 2010-14
- Injecting drug use among crystal users has increased by 50% during 2005-14
- Crystal use associated with a range of sex and drug use practices
- Further research required to understand cultures of crystal use among gay men

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