

# Barriers to stimulant treatment access for women who use methamphetamine in inner Sydney

**A qualitative study**

**K Van Gordon, V Malone, F Magee, B Clifford, N Ezard**

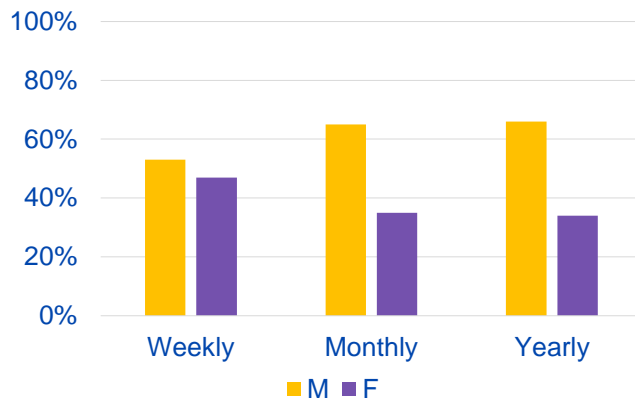
UNDER THE STEWARDSHIP OF MARY AIKENHEAD MINISTRIES

## Where are all the women?



## Frequency of use by gender (NDSHS)

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## Aims

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To understand the barriers to accessing the Stimulant Treatment Centre, Darlinghurst for females who misuse methamphetamines.



## Method

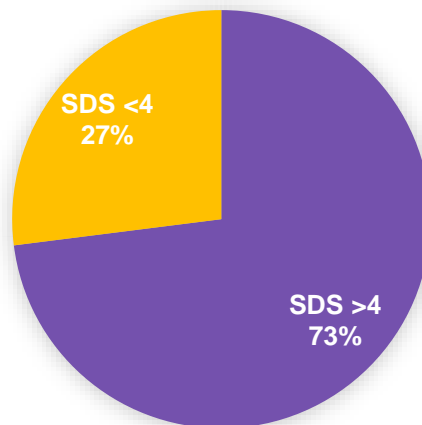
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- A qualitative enquiry
  - Questionnaire and semi structured interviews
  - Eligibility - weekly MA use, identify as women
  - Ethics - St Vincent's Hospital Sydney HREC
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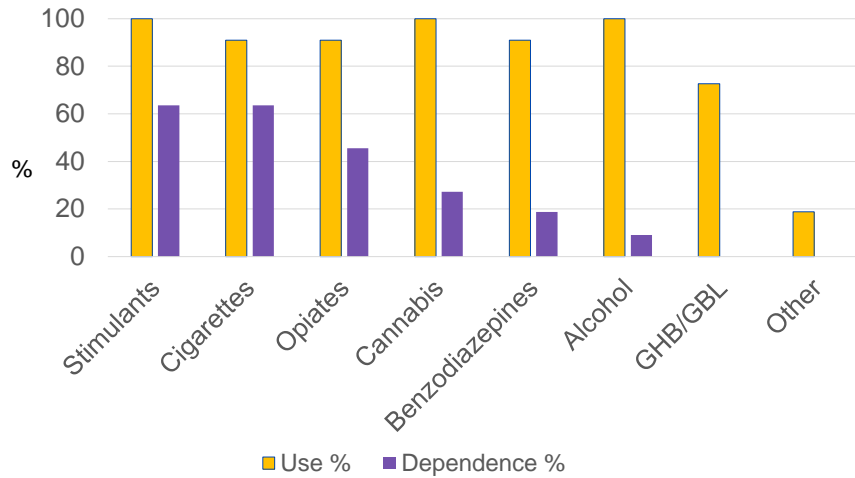
## Participant Characteristics

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- N=11
- 3 women identified as Aboriginal/  
Torres Strait Islander



## Participant Characteristics



## Findings

## Findings

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Barriers to accessing drug specific treatment are due to:

- Not identifying as dependent
- Stigma
- Social Isolation

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## *I'm not normal...but I'm not that bad*

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Theme	Barrier
Gender transgression	Not identifying as dependent
Boundary setting	



## Gender Transgression

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*"I really need to go back to the family. The ice has stopped me from doing things that I should be doing"*

(Participant 6)

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## Boundary Setting

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*"You know, swapping sex for drugs - it's not my thing"*

(Participant 3)

*"I feel sorry for her...she doesn't have that self control"*

(Participant 1)

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## *I sometimes feel powerless... but I'm not a victim*

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Theme	Barrier
Power discordance	Stigma
Impact of use	Social Isolation
Empowered use	Not identifying as dependent



## **Power discordance**

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*'With some doctors ...once they realised you're a sex worker or a drug user their whole persona changes'*

(Participant 4)



## Impact of use

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*“There's too much co-dependency ... I think that's why women aren't stepping out”*

*(Participant 6)*

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## Empowered use

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*“I enjoyed the experience very much ... it elevated my levels of ... **superwoman likeness**”*

*(Participant 3)*

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## Discussion

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Women were:

- aware of transgression with use but set boundaries
  - able to identify benefits to use
  - health seeking but not for methamphetamine dependence
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## Discussion

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Accounts of

- stigma and abuse at multiple levels when seen to transgress from expected carer role
  - variation to the extent women identified as victims
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## Conclusion

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Barriers to accessing drug specific treatment are due to:

- Lack of identity of dependence
  - Persistent judgement and stigma at an interpersonal, structural and institutional level, for females who misuse methamphetamines.
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## Limitations

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- Metropolitan (limited applicability to outer urban/rural/remote use)
  - Participants recruited from services, so already able to engage to some degree.
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## Practice implications

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Improve our service by:

- Continuing research
  - Improve identification
  - Encourage harm reduction strategies
  - Provide non-judgemental care
  - Support women's needs
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## Disclosure of interest

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Funding for this research was provided by Alcohol and Drug Services, St Vincent's Hospital

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## References

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## Questions?