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ABUSE OF CRYSTAL METH IN NIGERIA: ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

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Abstract
Among the countless public health concerns, harmful substance use has gradually emerged as one of the most tropic issues in global health and significantly contributes to the global disease burden and mortality rate. One of such substance is crystal meth. Crystal meth also known as Methamphetamine (MA) is a synthetic stimulant that affects the brain and central nervous system and smoking is the most common route of administration for it. When smoked or injected, it produces an initial rush that lasts only a couple of minutes but is intensely pleasurable and this is followed by prolonged high results in an extended period of euphoria. The half-life of crystal meth (Methamphetamine) ranges from 10–30 hours depending on the purity of the drug, urine pH, and the amount consumed is like other psychoactive drugs of abuse.One of the outstanding effects of abusing crystal meth is impaired judgment and lack of rational thinking. Addicts develop psychological problems such as depression, anxiety and irritability. Apart from personality problems, it affects the physical and mental health, academic performance, normal functioning and cause relationship loss and self-esteem of its adductors, therefore inhibiting the addicts to perform their routine family and social duties. This paper concludes that crystal meth consumption among youth is dangerous and need to be prevented by all and sundry.
Keywords: Use, abuse, crystal meth, issues, challenges and way-forward

Introduction

Drug abuse is a global problem that poses a great danger to the lives of individuals, society, political and security in many countries including Nigeria. The use of illicit substance has increased throughout the world and the world trend is the increasing availability of many kinds of such as crystal meth among ever widening spectrum of consumers. Of major concern is that youth seem to be targeted as the new market for the drug industry globally (United Nations, 2018). The issue of crystal meth abuses is no longer limited to small part of the population but has hit the people from all walks of life. The poor people use it to escape from the awful realities of the life, and the rich people use these drugs as an extension of the western culture. The problem of drug addiction has spread its tentacles in the society at an alarming pace and is destroying the very youth. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2017) substance abuse is persistent or sporadic drug use inconsistent with or unrelated to acceptable medical practice. A drug is any substance which causes a variation in an organism's functioning or thinking when consumed. Drug abuse is a powerful and often willful misuse of drugs. It is use of certain chemicals for the purpose of creating pleasurable effects on the brain. Drugs change mood and behaviour in a manner characterized by a maladaptive pattern of use. Eggert (2016) says that drug abuse is the use of drug that can cause disorder characterized by the use of a mood or behavioural pattern resulting in significant impairment, such as failure to fulfill social or occupational obligations or recurrent use in situations in which it is physically dangerous to do so or which ends in legal problems. It is excessive use of more than the regular dose of piles or use someone else's prescription and one of such drugs is crystal meth. Crystal meth also known as Methamphetamine (MA) is a synthetic stimulant that affects the brain and central nervous system and smoking is the most common route of administration for it (Klasser& Epstein, 2015). When smoked or injected, it produces an initial rush that lasts only a couple of minutes but is intensely pleasurable.

It is locally referred to as "mkpurummiri" and "tik" due to the "ticking" sound produced when smoked (Peltzer et al, 2019). The abuse of crystal meth among the youths is menacing and vicious problem that not only Nigeria is facing but the world at large. This is a common phrase we hear daily on social media or television. Each inhabitant of the planet knows that drugs causes irreparable harm, despite this people still continue to use them. The life of drug abusers also becomes spoiled in all aspects. Drug abuse causes multiple problems for countries and communities. One of the most important effects of abusing crystal meth is impaired judgment and a lack of rational thinking. Addicts develop psychological problems such as depression, anxiety and irritability, apart from personality problems. It affects the physical and mental health, academic performance, normal functioning, relationship loss and self-esteem of its adductors. The addicts are not able to perform their routine family and social duties and needs to be admitted in rehabilitation centre often requiring costly treatment.

Definition of Term

Crystal meth, short for **crystal methamphetamine,** is a powerful and highly addictive **stimulant drug** that affects the central nervous system. It is a form of **methamphetamine** that appears as clear, crystalline shards or bluish-white crystals, resembling glass or ice, which is why it is sometimes referred to as **"ice", "glass",** or**"crystal"**. The drug is most commonly smoked, but it can also be snorted, injected, or ingested orally (National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA], 2021)

Composition of Crystal Meth

Crystal methamphetamine (crystal meth) is a highly potent and addictive stimulant that belongs to the amphetamine class of drugs. It is chemically related to amphetamine, a substance that is often used to treat conditions like ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), but methamphetamine is much more potent and has a much higher potential for abuse and addiction. In its purest form, crystal meth is often found as clear, crystalline chunks or bluish-white crystals that resemble shards of glass or ice, which is why it is sometimes referred to as "ice" or "glass" (National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA], 2021).

Chemical Composition of Crystal Methamphetamine: Methamphetamine is chemically composed of the C10H15N structure, which represents its molecular formula. This structure is made up of Carbon (C): 10 atoms, Hydrogen (H): 15 atoms and Nitrogen (N): 1 atom. Methamphetamine is synthesized from pseudoephedrine or ephedrine, compounds commonly found in certain over-the-counter medications (such as decongestants). These precursors are chemically altered in illegal labs to produce methamphetamine.

Synthesis Process (Chemical Reaction): The synthesis of methamphetamine involves a series of chemical reactions, often utilizing hazardous chemicals and solvents. The most common method used in the illicit production of crystal meth is the "reductive amination" process. This method involves using pseudoephedrine (or ephedrine) as the starting compound and combining it with a reducing agent, such as lithium or sodium metal, and an acid (like hydrochloric acid), in a process that reduces the oxygen atoms in the precursor molecule, producing methamphetamine. Another method used to produce methamphetamine is the "N-methyl-1-phenylpropan-2-amine" synthesis, which may involve various chemicals such as anhydrous ammonia, red phosphorus, and iodine crystals. These chemicals are extremely dangerous and contribute to the risk of explosions and toxic fumes during the illegal production process.Due to the dangerous and toxic nature of these chemical reactions, methamphetamine production typically takes place in clandestine labs. These labs can be found in remote locations or even in abandoned buildings. The production process often leads to significant environmental hazards due to the chemical waste produced (National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA], 2021).

How It Works

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When crystal meth is consumed, it rapidly enters the brain and increases the release of **dopamine**, a neurotransmitter associated with pleasure, reward, and motivation. This flood of dopamine causes intense feelings of euphoria, increased energy, heightened focus, and a sense of invincibility. These effects typically last for several hours, but they come at a significant cost to the brain and body (**NIDA,** 2021).

How Crystal Meth Looks Like

Crystal meth is the form most commonly depicted in media and the one many people think of first. It resembles shiny, bluish-white rocks or glass fragments and is often used by smoking. This form is known for its high potency and the intense rush it provides. Its crystalline, glittering appearance is why it's sometimes referred to as "ice" or "glass."





Powder Meth

Powder meth is another prevalent form, appearing as a fine, white, or off-white powder that can easily be mistaken for other substances like flour or powdered sugar. Due to its powder form, it's versatile in how it can be consumed, including snorting, swallowing, injecting (when dissolved), or even smoking. The color can vary to include shades of yellow, pink, or light brown depending on the purity and the chemicals used in its production.



Pill Form

Meth in pill form, often called "yaba" in some regions, is less common but still poses a significant risk. These pills can range in color and are sometimes used medicinally for conditions like ADHD, though they are more often abused for their stimulant effects. The pills might be ingested or crushed and snorted by users seeking a quick high.





Base Meth

Base meth is a less frequently encountered form, characterized by its waxy, oily, or pasty texture. This form is more potent than powder meth and varies in color from white to brown. It's primarily smoked or injected, offering a fast and powerful effect.

Identification of Crystal Meth by Taste & Smell

When discussing how to identify methamphetamine by its smell and taste, it's crucial to emphasize the significant risks involved in directly interacting with the substance. Methamphetamine is manufactured using a variety of toxic chemicals, and exposure to these substances can be harmful to your health. Therefore, it is strongly advise against attempting to smell or taste meth as a means of identification. This section is provided purely for educational purposes, aiming to broaden understanding rather than encourage direct contact with potentially dangerous drugs.

The Smell of Meth

Pure methamphetamine itself is odorless, making it difficult to detect by smell alone. However, the process of manufacturing meth often involves volatile and noxious chemicals, which can leave a strong residual odor on the final product. Meth can sometimes emit an ammonia-like smell, reminiscent of cat urine or cleaning products, due to the chemicals used in its synthesis. Other times, it might have an acrid, solvent-like scent, similar to nail polish remover or paint thinner. These smells are not from the meth itself but from the substances mixed with it during its illegal production.

The Taste of Meth

As for the taste of meth, it's reported to be bitterly chemical, with a lingering unpleasantness that is hard to ignore. Descriptions often include comparisons to the taste of burnt plastic or metallic bitterness, which is a direct reflection of the chemical composition of the drug. Like with its smell, the taste of meth is influenced by the myriad of hazardous substances used in its clandestine manufacture.

It's important to remember that methamphetamine's chemical makeup can be incredibly harmful, and any attempt to identify it through taste could result in poisoning or the absorption of dangerous substances into your body. Our focus on these sensory characteristics is meant to provide a comprehensive view of meth's properties, not to encourage personal investigation. If you encounter a substance you suspect to be meth, the safest course of action is to contact the appropriate authorities or professionals who are equipped to handle such materials safely.

Items Commonly Used with Meth

Identifying meth use isn't just about recognizing the drug itself; it's also about noticing the paraphernalia and other items that often accompany its consumption. These objects can be indicators of meth use and are important to recognize for anyone concerned about a loved one or acquaintance. Here, we detail some common items associated with meth use, providing insight into what to look for.

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Glass Pipes

One of the most telltale signs of meth use is the presence of glass pipes. These pipes, sometimes called "bowls," are used for smoking crystal meth, allowing the user to heat and vaporize the substance to inhale its smoke. They can vary in size and design but often feature a bulbous end where the meth is placed.



Foil and Burnt Spoons

Meth can also be consumed by heating it on a piece of aluminum foil and inhaling the vapors, a method known as "chasing the dragon." Similarly, spoons with burn marks may be used to melt meth before injection, making these items indicative of meth use.





Syringes and Needles

For those who inject meth, syringes and needles are common tools. Finding these items, especially when accompanied by other drug paraphernalia, can indicate meth use. Injection marks or "track marks" on the skin are also signs of intravenous drug use.

Straws or Hollowed Pens

Meth powder can be snorted, requiring a tube or straw-like object to inhale the substance into the nose. Hollowed-out pens, cut straws, or rolled pieces of paper are often used for this purpose and can be a red flag for meth use.

Baggage or Wrapping

Meth is often stored in small plastic bags, balloons, or pieces of cling wrap. Finding these containers, especially with residue that looks like small crystals or powder, can be an indicator of meth possession or use.

Digital Scales

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Given the importance of dosage for users, digital scales are sometimes found among the possessions of those who use meth regularly. These scales are used to measure precise amounts of the drug for consumption.

Identifying Meth Use

Identifying someone who may be using meth is not just about recognizing the substance or the items associated with its use; it's also crucial to be aware of the physical signs exhibited by individuals. These signs can be stark indicators of meth abuse and understanding them can be vital in recognizing when someone might need help. Here is a concise list of physical signs to look out for:

- **Dilated Pupils**: A common reaction to stimulant use, including meth.
- **Rapid Weight Loss**: Meth can significantly decrease appetite, leading to sudden weight loss.
- **Dental Problems**: Often referred to as "meth mouth," users can experience severe dental decay.
- **Skin Sores**: Users may have open sores or infections from picking at their skin.
- **Excessive Sweating**: Meth increases the body's temperature and heart rate, leading to sweating.
- **Erratic Sleeping Patterns**: Users often go through cycles of insomnia followed by excessive sleeping.
- **Burn Marks on Lips or Fingers**: These can result from smoking meth with glass pipes.

Recognizing these physical signs can be a first step in identifying meth use and potentially guiding someone towards getting the help they need.

Factors Promoting Abuse of Crystal Meth in Nigeria

People who deal with the impact of crystal meth, whether it is health care officials, law enforcement, social service agencies or community groups, all agree there are multiple socio-economic reasons people turn to the drug. Without question, a major factor is its cheap price and availability. But beyond the accessibility issue, the key reason is that something, or things are wrong in the lives of people who become addicted to the drug. It is often a combination of many factors. It can be the result of other underlying mental health issues. But very often there are socio-economic reasons such as unemployment and poverty, homelessness, sexual assault, other forms of abuse, family dysfunction, or the long-term effects of residential school experience on indigenous people (Hides et al, 2015). The bottom line is that people at-risk communities are especially vulnerable to becoming drawn into the crystal meth web as they try to cope with the reality of their lives. The rapid and powerful effects of crystal meth, which give people a sense of euphoria and mental acuity, provides an escape from the challenges that people face. In effect, it alters an individual's emotional reality by stimulating their senses in a way that provides relief from the circumstances of their lives. But citing the social factors driving the crystal meth numbers does not mean that people are absolved of personal responsibility for their actions. Ultimately it is about choices individuals make about how to deal with their circumstances (Yeo et al., 2017).

The factors are spelt down as follows:

(a) **Family background**: The family especially the parents are the child's basic socializing agents. Muthigani (2015) indicates that a child gains his or her first standard of behavior from the teaching of parents and other grown-up persons around. If a child observes a disjuncture between parents teaching and practice, it creates doubt, which is carried into adolescence, giving rise to deviant behaviour. Eggert (2016) associates delinquency, for example alcohol and drug abuse with lax, inconsistent or abusive parental discipline. Indeed the family setup of a child influences his or her habits. If a child is borne of a drug addict then there is a likelihood of the same habits being transferred.There were several problems at the family level that affected the initiation of methamphetamine use among the youths, such as not having parents, parental divorce, family conflicts, and poor parenting. Family relationships and parenting styles is also a factor influencing the initiation of methamphetamine use among the youths.

(b) **Peer Pressure:** According to the United Nations (2013), drug users like other people seek approval of their behaviour from whom they attempt to convince to join them in their habits as a way of seeking acceptance. Muthigani (2015) conducted studies on the issue of drug use and abuse and agreed that there is significant relationship between the subject's drug using behaviour and involvement of their friends in drugs. According to him, if an adolescent associates with other adolescents who use drugs, the risk of involvement with drugs is further increased. Another survey of youth in Southern Nigeria, also found out that the source of drugs for drug using among students was friends in the same or neighbouring schools, and students who reported using drugs had more drug using than abstinent friends (Imbosa, 2012).

(c) Availability and cost of drugs: Availability and cost of drugs is associated with drug abuse. Kaguthi (2014) noted that availability of illegal drugs such as crystal meth, heroin, cocaine and mandrax, together with the availability of legal substances such as cigarettes and alcohol may lead to drug abuse. The ready availability of most drugs appears to be the most important cause of the prevalence of substance use, and abuse amongst the Nigerian youth. For instance, medicines (drugs) are purchased from chemists even without a physician's prescription. Kithi (2017) supports this by stating that addicts are reported to visit chemists to get dose of Tramadol- a drug that should strictly be sold on prescription.

(d) Environment: Environment plays a part in deviant behaviour including drug abuse. Environmental activities are a focal point for adolescents' behaviour (Kandel, 2015). Youths as well as other people are individuals with their unique problems and critical issues that can be tackled meaningfully only on individual basis. Failure to address the problems encountered by youths such as unemployment, broken home, poverty could result in feelings of hopelessness, hatred, failure and physical weakness. In an attempt to overcome the above mentioned feelings, youths seek refuge in drugs. Such persons may become social drinkers or drug abusers. Karechio (2016) asserts that low performance in class and life generally may lead to misuse of drugs such as crystal meth which is believed to improve understanding and insight. This misconception is based on the belief that people who use or abuse substances will become bold, confident or courageous.

(e) Age: According to Gillis (2016), young people are individuals in the process of development and charge. During this period they experiment with newly discovered aspects of their physical and emotional selves. Youth are likely to experiment with drugs and some will be addicted.

(f) Myths about crystal meth: There are quite a number of myths about drug use which serves as an impetus to the growing incidents of drug abuse in Nigeria. There is this common belief among the youths that drug use makes one to bold and confident, that when one abuses drug, no one dares him or her, the person is incharge and full control, get what he/she want at ease without struggling. These beliefs have made a lot of youths to go into abusing drugs and become terror to the society.

(g) **Poverty and Economic Factor:** Poverty is a major problem affecting many families in Nigeria. Poverty and economic down turn have forced many families into allowing their children to hawk things for sale, even at unholy hours and places to augment the family income, thereby exposing them to avoidable danger of being lured into abusing drugs.

Individual income and the family's poor economic status is also perceived factors influencing the initiation of methamphetamine use among youths. Families with poor economic status could not support their children to have good opportunities in their lives, including schooling. The children needed to drop out of school and work in the field to support the family while they are young. When a family had poor economic status, children became a person who used methamphetamine for several reasons, such as improving their energy for work, relieving pain, adjusting their social relationships with their peers and addressing mental problems.

Low self-esteem: Low self-esteem is one of the factors that influencing the initiation of methamphetamine use among youths. Individuals who used amphetamine did so because they had low self-esteem. They could not identify their strong points themselves. People who have low self-esteem act based on others' ideas or

commands, particularly those of their parents. Majority of the youths follow commands or orders of their parents regarding what to do or not to do in everyday life. Then, those with the characteristic of having low self-esteem were more easily motivated to use methamphetamine by their peers to become independent.

School dropout: A large proportion of youths who were exposed to methamphetamine were people out of school. There were several reasons for leaving school, such a lack of family support and poor academic performance. Commonly, youths who were out of the school had a greater probability of methamphetamine use than those who were attending school due to having a greater chance of exposure to people who were in using methamphetamine and living in the same village. Ultimately, they would be motivated to initiate methamphetamine use by their peers through several activities, such as a new year's party or after a sports game in the evening. A longer period of exposure to people who were using drugs in the village increased the odds of methamphetamine use initiation among the Akha and Lahu youths. Those who were unemployed and blamed by their parents were at much a greater risk of initiating methamphetamine use

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Challenges of Abuse of Crystal Meth Consumption in Nigeria

The use and abuse of crystal methamphetamine, commonly referred to as crystal meth, is a significant and growing concern, especially among youth. This potent stimulant drug has widespread and devastating effects, not only on the individuals who abuse it but also on families, communities, and society at large. Below is a detailed exploration of the challenges associated with crystal meth use and abuse among youths.

1. Health Risks

Crystal meth is a highly addictive substance that stimulates the central nervous system, leading to numerous immediate and long-term health consequences. Methamphetamine abuse can increase heart rate, blood pressure, and the risk of stroke, heart attacks, and respiratory issues (National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA], 2020). Youths, whose bodies are still developing, are particularly vulnerable to these harmful effects. Chronic use of meth can result in significant brain damage, impairing cognitive functions such as memory, attention, and decision-making (Chang et al., 2007). Studies have shown that methamphetamine can cause a reduction in dopamine transporters, which are crucial for mood regulation and reward systems (Boileau et al., 2006). One of the most recognizable physical consequences of meth abuse is severe dental decay, often referred to as "meth mouth," which results from the drug's ability to dry out the mouth and cause neglect of personal hygiene due to the drug's compulsive nature (Sauer et al., 2012).

Methamphetamine abuse is linked with a range of mental health issues, especially among young users. Meth users can experience severe paranoia, delusions, and hallucinations, which can lead to dangerous behaviors (NIDA, 2020). Youths may be particularly susceptible to developing long-term mental health disorders, as their brains are still developing and are more sensitive to the effects of drugs. Methamphetamine use can trigger or exacerbate mood disorders such as anxiety and depression. These mental health challenges often persist even after cessation of drug use, contributing to a cycle of substance abuse as youths may attempt to self-medicate (Dluzen& Anderson, 2002).

2. Addiction and Dependency

Methamphetamine is one of the most addictive drugs, and its use can rapidly lead to physical and psychological dependence. As youths continue to use meth, their bodies develop a tolerance to the drug, requiring larger doses to achieve the same effects. This leads to an increased risk of overdose. Additionally, methamphetamine causes intense cravings, making it difficult for users to quit without professional intervention (NIDA, 2020). Crystal meth can induce a powerful sense of euphoria in the initial stages, which reinforces continued use. However, the euphoric effects quickly wear off, prompting users to consume the drug again to avoid the unpleasant "crash" or come-down (Glasner-Edwards & Mooney, 2014). This cycle of

using, crashing, and then using again is a hallmark of addiction and is difficult to break without proper treatment and support.

3. Social Implications

The abuse of methamphetamine can lead to significant social problems, particularly within the family unit. Meth use causes profound behavioral changes that can strain relationships. Methamphetamine users may exhibit aggressive behavior, irritability, and emotional instability, all of which can alienate family members, leading to conflicts and breakdowns in relationships (Smith et al., 2010). The stigma associated with drug use can cause youths to isolate themselves from family and friends, further exacerbating the addiction problem (Corrigan et al., 2014).

The cognitive and behavioral effects of methamphetamine abuse severely impact a young person's academic and professional potential. Methamphetamine use impairs concentration, memory, and the ability to focus, which can lead to poor academic performance and, in some cases, school dropout (McLellan et al., 2000). For youths already at risk of academic challenges, meth use further limits their chances of succeeding. Young people who become addicted to meth often experience difficulties maintaining stable employment. Methamphetamine abuse can reduce work productivity, increase absenteeism, and cause erratic behavior, leading to job loss and difficulty finding future employment (Hser et al., 2009).

4. Psychosocial Impact

Peer pressure is one of the strongest factors that contribute to drug use among adolescents. Youths may experiment with methamphetamine to fit in or to gain approval from their peers. Many youths are introduced to meth through their social circles, where drug use may be normalized or even encouraged. This is especially true in environments where meth use is more prevalent, such as in certain urban or rural communities (Peterson et al., 2009). Adolescents are generally more prone to engage in risk-taking behaviors due to the developmental stage of their brains. The prefrontal cortex, responsible for decision-making and impulse control, is not fully developed in youths, making them more likely to experiment with substances like meth (Steinberg, 2008).

Many youths struggling with addiction also face underlying mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, or trauma-related disorders. Some youths use meth as a way to cope with difficult emotions or mental health conditions. Unfortunately, meth only exacerbates these issues over time, often leading to a vicious cycle of substance abuse and worsening mental health (Tucker et al., 2013).

5. Barriers to Treatment

Youth meth users often experience significant stigma due to their drug use, which can deter them from seeking help or accessing treatment. Many youths avoid treatment for fear of being judged by their peers, family, or society, which can delay recovery (Friedman et al., 2004). This is compounded by the shame associated with addiction, making it harder to break free from the cycle of abuse. In many regions, particularly in rural or low-income areas, access to effective drug treatment programs is limited. This can make it difficult for youths to find the help they need, especially if they require specialized services such as inpatient rehabilitation or counseling (Hser et al., 2009).

6. Legal and Economic Consequences

The use, possession, and distribution of methamphetamine are illegal in most countries, and youths caught using or selling meth may face serious legal consequences. Arrests related to meth use can result in criminal records, which can severely impact a youth's future opportunities, including access to higher education, employment, and housing (Friedman et al., 2004). Youths may engage in illegal activities, such as theft, to support their meth addiction, further entangling them in the criminal justice system (Glasner-Edwards et al., 2014).

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The financial burden of meth addiction extends beyond the individual user. Methamphetamine is an expensive drug to obtain, and individuals addicted to meth may spend a significant portion of their income or engage in illegal activities to fund their addiction (Friedman et al., 2004). This financial strain can lead to impoverished living conditions and affect families who bear the economic burden.

Way-Forward on the Abuse of Crystal Meth

Addressing the abuse of crystal methamphetamine among youth is a complex challenge that requires a comprehensive and multi-layered approach. Effective strategies need to target prevention, early intervention, treatment, and long-term recovery, while also addressing the social, psychological, and economic factors that drive drug abuse. This requires coordinated efforts from families, schools, communities, healthcare systems, and policymakers. Below is a detailed exploration of the **way-forward** to address the use and abuse of crystal meth among youth.

1. Prevention Strategies

Prevention is the most effective way to mitigate the use of crystal meth among youth. Early intervention is critical to preventing initial exposure, especially in adolescence, when individuals are most vulnerable to peer pressure and experimentation with drugs.

A. School-Based Programs

School settings are critical for providing education on the dangers of substance abuse. Programs that focus on increasing awareness of methamphetamine's dangers, building resilience, and teaching coping skills are essential. Schools should implement evidence-based drug education programs that focus not just on drug facts but on building skills to resist peer pressure, develop healthy coping strategies, and make positive life choices. Programs like **Life Skills Training (LST)**and**Project ALERT** have been proven effective in preventing adolescent drug use, including methamphetamine (Botvin et al., 2015). These programs focus on self-management, peer resistance skills, and decision-making, which are important for reducing susceptibility to drug use. Teaching youth about mental health, coping mechanisms, and stress management can prevent the use of methamphetamine as a coping mechanism. Youth with untreated mental health issues like anxiety, depression, and trauma are at greater risk for drug abuse (Tucker et al., 2013). Programs that reduce stigma around mental health and promote seeking help can help prevent meth use in the first place. Involving peer mentors in educational efforts can also be effective. Peer-to-peer interventions help foster trust, making youth more likely to listen and internalize prevention messages (McNeely & Blanchard, 2009). By having older peers who have either recovered from addiction or who have not used methamphetamine, youth are provided with relatable role models.

B. Community-Based Programs

Community-based initiatives can complement school programs by involving local organizations and addressing youth at risk for drug use in their environment. Structured, engaging activities, such as sports, arts, and vocational programs, offer youth positive alternatives to drug use. These programs build social skills, increase self-esteem, and offer a sense of belonging—all of which reduce the likelihood of turning to substances like methamphetamine (Peterson et al., 2009).

Family plays a crucial role in the prevention of methamphetamine use. Research suggests that strong, supportive family relationships are a significant protective factor against drug use. Family-based prevention programs, such as the **Strengthening Families Program**, can teach parents and children how to communicate effectively, set boundaries, and avoid risky behaviors (Kumpfer et al., 2002).

Media campaigns can be used to raise awareness about the dangers of meth use, targeting both young people and their families. Campaigns should aim to reduce stigma surrounding drug use and increase knowledge about the risks of methamphetamine addiction.

2. Early Intervention

Early intervention is crucial to preventing youth from progressing from experimentation to regular use and addiction. Identifying at-risk youth early and providing support can prevent further harm.

A. Screening and Early Detection

Screening tools should be regularly used in schools, healthcare settings, and community organizations to identify youths who may be at risk for methamphetamine use. Implementing routine screening for substance use in schools and community clinics can help identify at-risk youth before their drug use escalates. Tools like the **Adolescent Alcohol and Drug Use Screening** tool and the **CAGE-AID** tool (used for alcohol and drug dependence) are effective for early detection (National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA], 2020). Since many youths turn to methamphetamine to cope with mental health issues, psychological screening should be integrated into substance use screening to identify underlying issues such as depression, anxiety, or trauma.

B. Brief Intervention Programs

For those identified as experimenting with drugs or engaging in risky behaviors, brief intervention programs can be effective in reducing further substance use.

Motivational Interviewing (MI)s a counseling approach that helps individuals explore and resolve ambivalence about their drug use, fostering motivation for change. MI is effective in reducing methamphetamine use, especially when youth are engaged in the process of self-reflection and decision-making (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). School counselors, social workers, and healthcare providers can use MI to guide youth towards making healthier choices.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a proven therapeutic approach for addressing substance abuse and can help youths develop the cognitive tools to resist meth use. CBT helps individuals identify negative thought patterns and replace them with more constructive behaviors (Beck, 2011).

3. Treatment and Rehabilitation

For youths already struggling with methamphetamine addiction, timely and effective treatment is essential. Specialized, youth-focused rehabilitation programs are crucial for recovery and long-term sobriety.

A. Youth-Specific Treatment Programs:

Treating adolescent substance abuse requires an approach tailored to the specific developmental needs of young people. Residential rehab programs that focus on the unique needs of youth, such as educational support and developmental guidance, are essential for those with severe addictions. These programs can provide a structured environment where adolescents can detox safely and receive intensive therapy (McLellan et al., 2000). Outpatient treatment programs offer flexibility and allow youth to continue with their education and social activities while receiving therapy. These programs should provide individual and group counseling, family therapy, and skills training to prevent relapse. Many adolescents struggling with methamphetamine addiction also suffer from co-occurring mental health disorders such as depression or anxiety. A dual diagnosis approach addresses both substance use and mental health issues simultaneously, increasing the chances of successful recovery (Hser et al., 2009).

B. Support Groups and Peer Mentorship

Peer-led support groups such as **Narcotics Anonymous** (NA) can provide youths with a network of individuals who understand their struggles and offer mutual support. Peer mentorship has been shown to improve treatment outcomes by reducing feelings of isolation and providing a safe space to share experiences (Kelly & Hoeppner, 2013). Programs that involve family members in the treatment process have been shown to improve long-term recovery outcomes. Family therapy helps improve communication, addresses underlying family dynamics, and builds a supportive recovery environment at home (Tucker et al., 2013).

4. Reducing Stigma and Encouraging Treatment Seeking

The stigma surrounding methamphetamine use often prevents youths from seeking help. Reducing this stigma is vital for encouraging more young people to access the support and treatment they need.

A. Public Education Campaigns

Campaigns aimed at reducing the stigma associated with drug use and addiction can help normalize seeking help and prevent isolation. These campaigns should educate the public on the nature of addiction, treating it as a medical condition rather than a moral failure.

B. Promote Empathy and Understanding

Involving former methamphetamine users who have successfully recovered in awareness campaigns and support groups can humanize the issue, showing youth that recovery is possible. Recovery advocates who speak about their experiences can serve as role models, providing hope to young people who are struggling with addiction.

5. Addressing Root Causes of Methamphetamine Use

Methamphetamine use is often driven by underlying social, psychological, and environmental factors. Addressing these root causes is essential for long-term prevention and recovery.

A. Mental Health Support

Providing accessible mental health services to youth is crucial in preventing methamphetamine abuse, especially since many young people turn to drugs to self-medicate for untreated mental health issues (Dluzen& Anderson, 2002). Services should include counseling, therapy, and support for dealing with trauma, stress, and emotional difficulties.

B. Community Support Systems

Communities should offer youth programs that foster a sense of belonging, promote social cohesion, and reduce isolation. This can include mentoring programs, youth clubs, job training initiatives, and after-school programs that provide opportunities for personal growth and connection (Steinberg, 2008).

6. Policy and Legal Measures

Finally, effective policies can help limit access to methamphetamine and ensure youth have access to effective treatments.

A. Stronger Regulation of Methamphetamine Precursors

Governments can pass legislation to regulate the sale of chemicals commonly used to produce methamphetamine, such as pseudoephedrine, which can significantly reduce meth availability (Friedman et al., 2004).

B. Alternatives to Incarceration

Instead of punishing youth caught with methamphetamine, legal systems should prioritize diversion programs that focus on rehabilitation rather than incarceration. This approach reduces recidivism and ensures that youths have access to the help they need (Glasner-Edwards et al., 2014).

Conclusion

Cristal meth is a highly addictive psycho-stimulant drug that is chemically related to amphetamine. Methamphetamine can produce euphoria and stimulant effects like those from other stimulants such as cocaine. In addition, methamphetamine is easily synthesized from inexpensive and readily obtainable chemicals. Those qualities have led to the widespread and rampant abuse of this dangerous drug (Panenka et al, 2013). The challenges associated with the use and abuse of crystal methamphetamine among youths are significant and multifaceted, involving health risks, addiction, mental health struggles, and social implications. Collaborative efforts from families, schools, healthcare providers, and community organizations are essential to create an environment that supports youth and reduces the prevalence of methamphetamine use. By addressing both the immediate and underlying causes of meth abuse, society can help young people overcome addiction, prevent future abuse, and provide them with opportunities for a healthier, more successful future.

Suggestions/Recommendations

1. Youths should be encouraged to engage in meaningful activities.
2. Youths should avoid the use of crystalline meth.
3. Parents should ensure they train their children properly.
4. Implementation of drug education in schools and communities should be ensured and culturally relevant messaging should be used.
5. Job opportunities, vocational training, and mental health support should be created for young people.
6. Youths who have already engaged in the use of crystalline meth should be properly counseling and early intervention for them.
7. There should be investment in government-run rehab centers with trained professionals and reintegration programs.
8. For communities where crystalline meth use is predominant there should be set laws to punish both sellers and users.
9. NDLEA should be supported with better training, funding, and anti-corruption measures to crack down both sellers and users of crystalline meth.
10. There should be Collaboration with foreign governments and agencies to disrupt meth trafficking networks.

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