



OSAM-O-GRAM

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Wright State University
The University of Akron

Targeted Response Initiative on Methamphetamine Abuse in Ohio Part III: Pathways to Methamphetamine Abuse

The 83 methamphetamine (meth) abusers interviewed for this study represented two distinct generations--“Older Generation” users, who reported first meth use more than 15 years ago, and “New Generation” users, who reported their first use of the drug in the more recent past--many less than 5 years ago. Both older and new generation users reported extensive histories of substance abuse prior to their initiation to methamphetamine. Data analysis shows that four drugs played important “mediating” roles in pathways to meth abuse.

(1) Powdered cocaine to methamphetamine. For many individuals, initiation to meth occurred in the context of their previous familiarity and/or experiences with powdered cocaine. In some situations, meth was purposely misrepresented as being cocaine. For instance, as a 30-year-old white man from Toledo described his first meth use, *“I was with my friend, and he said he had some really great coke; he called it super coke..... So I decided to try it, and it burned like nothing I had ever done [intranasal inhalation]. I was really mad at first because he tricked me, but after a bit I was like ‘wow, happy,’ because it was the greatest high ever.”*

(2) Crack cocaine to methamphetamine. Another group of individuals reported prior experiences with crack cocaine, and some were introduced to meth by their crack-smoking associates. A 27-year-old white man from the Dayton area commented, *“I was like man, I need to go find a rock [crack]. He’s like, ‘I got some meth.’ And I was like, ‘What is that?’ ‘Oh, here, try it. It’s the same thing, except it’s cheaper. I tried it, ‘hey, alright, good, let’s get some more.’”* Many participants shared a perception that meth is typically a less expensive habit, and not as “degrading” as crack.

(3) MDMA/Ecstasy to methamphetamine. Some “New Generation” users were introduced to meth in the rave scene. Although many of these individuals had prior experiences with powdered cocaine, their initiation to meth occurred in the context of their Ecstasy use. For example, a 29-year-old white man from the Youngstown area commented, *“I moved back up here [Ohio], and Ecstasy wasn’t real available.... I started going to rave clubs up here, throwing parties and stuff..... I started DJ’in’ and then I started getting into meth when I was spinning records....”*

(4) Pharmaceutical stimulants to methamphetamine. Some “Older Generation” users had extensive histories with pharmaceutical stimulant abuse before their initiation to methamphetamine. A 57-year-old African-American man from the Dayton area, described his first use, *“I was at a drug house, and she come in. And we started talking, and I asked her did she do Ritalin? She said, ‘Ritalin?’ I said, ‘Yea.’ She said, ‘No, I do crystal meth.’ She said, ‘Try some a this.’ And it’s history.”*

Preliminary findings from this study suggest that current pathways to methamphetamine abuse are fueled by previous experiences with various stimulants and/or other club drug use.

OSAM-O-GRAMS report key findings of the Ohio Substance Abuse Monitoring (OSAM) Network. Informants located throughout the state use qualitative and quantitative data to provide semiannual monitoring of substance abuse trends. The OSAM Network is funded by the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services by contract to Wright State University and by subcontract to the University of Akron. This OSAM-O-GRAM is based on a field report received June 2005.

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