

## HIV RISK PROFILE OF CRYSTAL METHAMPHETAMINE USERS IN A COHORT OF YOUNG MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN

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**Objective:** To identify demographic and behavioural characteristics associated with the use of crystal methamphetamine (crystal).

**Methods:** As of November 2001 495 MSM had completed a follow-up questionnaire. Men who reported crystal in the previous year were compared to men who did not report crystal use with respect to socio-demographic characteristics, other substance use and sexual behaviour. Logistic regression analysis was used to determine characteristics of crystal users.

**Results:** One hundred twenty-five (25%) participants reported crystal use in the previous year. Men who reported living in stable housing, having at least a high school education and being employed (all OR: 0.4) were less likely to report crystal use. Caucasian men were 1.8 times more likely to report crystal use and younger men were more likely to report crystal use (Median:26 vs. 29 years). Participants who reported having sold sex in the previous year were 3.2 times more likely to report crystal use. Contemplation of suicide (OR: 2.2) and attempted suicide (OR: 2.2) were positively associated with crystal use. The use of other substances in the past were positively associated with crystal use, including marijuana (OR: 5.1), cocaine (OR: 11.7), nitrite inhalants (OR: 3.6), crack (OR: 10.1), speed (OR: 11.7), heroin (OR: 9.8) and ecstasy (OR: 15.5). Participants who reported injection drug use in the previous year were 4.9 times more likely to report crystal use. Crystal users were also more likely to have engaged in unprotected anal sex with known HIV-positive partners (OR: 4.3), to have had casual partners (OR: 2.3) and more casual partners (median: 5 vs. 3).

**Conclusion:** The use of crystal was positively associated with a number of HIV-risk behaviours including poly-substance use, injection drug use and risky sexual behaviour. HIV prevention efforts designed for young MSM should incorporate substance use counselling and education specific to crystal use in order to reduce the risk of HIV transmission.