

Methamphetamine: Relation to Sexual Risk Behaviours of Young Gay Men and Inadvertent Consumption in Tablets Sold as Ecstasy

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Objective

- ¥ Compare and contrast two club drugs: crystal (methamphetamine) & ecstasy (MDMA)
- ¥ Describe the extent to which tablets sold as ecstasy contain methamphetamine

Methods

- ¥ 12 HIV-1 *seroconverters*, 12 HIV-negative age-matched *controls* (average age 25, years old, range 19 — 30)
- ¥ Recruitment from within prospective cohort study of young gay-identified men
- ¥ Face-to-face *life history interviews*, 4 sessions with each participant, 2001-2002
- ¥ Textual data transcribed, analyzed with NUDIST[®] software
- ¥ *Laboratory analysis of tablets* seized at raves and clubs, Oct 2002 — Aug 2003

Results

I. Qualitative Interviews

- ¥ Men related a substantial knowledge of and experience with both drugs
- ¥ Both drugs had attributes that enhanced gay socialization and were used in the same places

Ecstasy was used to induce euphoria and group connectedness

I enjoy ecstasy on special occasions, maybe three to four times a year. I love going out and dancing. Case #1016

I only do [ecstasy] if I am with friends, when we are together. Case #1002

You feel totally uninhibited, but not always in a sexual way, more in an emotional way.... Ecstasy does not make me horny. I am happy to hug someone, go to sleep or listen to music. Control #1017

Crystal was used to remain awake and increase energy

On Friday we went to the circuit parties, nightclubs and after-hours. I eventually left Sunday night from the after-hours to meet my friend at another club. I slept two hours that weekend. I used crystal to keep going. Case #1006

Unlike ecstasy, crystal was:

- ¥ more likely to be used regularly by HIV-positive men
- ¥ considered highly addictive and problematic
- ¥ associated with a distinct pattern of sexual arousal that frequently included unprotected (sometimes group) sex

Some gay guys use crystal for sex because it keeps you wide awake and it seems like you can have sex forever and ever. That was my experience. Case #1013

I came down with seroconversion illness after a trip to San Francisco. I had sex with about eight men in three days. Crystal fuelled marathon sessions. Completely unprotected and not even thinking about it. Case #1016

I used to party with a bunch of guys and have sex for eight or nine hours. There would be people coming and going. Most of the guys were doing tons of crystal. They would have the stamina to fuck for hours. Case #1007

Unlike ecstasy, crystal was:

- ¥ frequently associated with erectile dysfunction

If you do too much crystal, you cannot get an erection. Case #1006

they [friends] could not get it up. They were doing crystal, so they would take Viagra. Case #1002

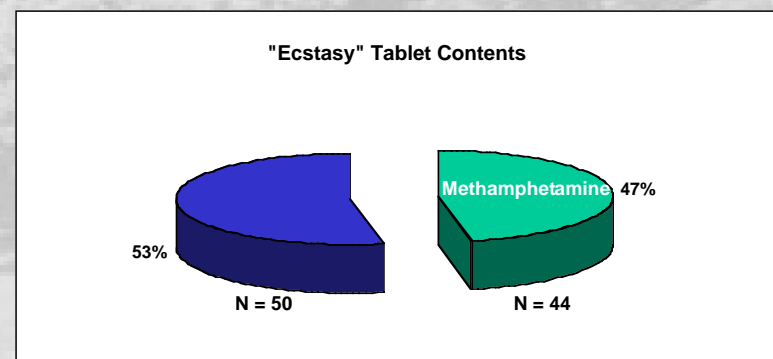
Erectile dysfunction, rarely mentioned by users of ecstasy, suggested the adulteration of ecstasy tablets

I get erection problems with ecstasy, and I get it with coke if the coke is cut with, I don't know what it would be cut with, um? I have it on occasion with coke. Case #1007

There are some types of ecstasy where you cannot get an erection either. Case #1006

II. Laboratory Analysis of Tablets sold as Ecstasy

- ¥ 60 of 94 seized tablets (64%) contained any detectable MDMA
- ¥ 44 of the 94 seized tablets (47%) contained *methamphetamine*, including 28 (47%) of the 60 that contained detectable MDMA



Conclusions

- Crystal and ecstasy are used in the same places
- Crystal differs markedly from ecstasy in relation to sexual risk behaviour
- 'Ecstasy' cut with methamphetamine is common in Vancouver
- Inadvertent consumption of methamphetamine by young gay men may be widespread

Acknowledgments

We thank the Vanguard Project participants for their generosity in sharing their collective life experiences. This study was supported by a grant from the National Health Research and Development Program and funding provided by the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS. Drs. Lampinen and Hogg are supported by the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research.

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