

FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

AMPHETAMINE TYPE STIMULANTS

(8 Participants, active users and some in recovery)

What was it that attracted you to start using 'ICE'?

The entire group started smoking ICE to start with as they;

- Wanted to try something new/try something with mates
- Liked the rush
- Its much stronger than speed and lasts a lot longer/better value for money
- Lowered appetite
- First choice as she is allergic to opiates
- Went on the maintenance program for my 'Heroin' use, 'ICE' was the only drug powerful enough to work over the Buprenorphine.

Has ICE always been your drug of choice? If not what was your initial drug of choice and why did you move on to 'ICE'?

- Most of the group started smoking cannabis at an early age before moving on to other illicit drugs.
- 3 people out of the group used Heroin as their drug of choice and moved on to the maintenance program before ever trying 'ICE'.
- Better value for money-Stronger/lasts longer
- Only drug strong enough to work over the Buprenorphine

What method of administration was used when you first used 'ICE'?

The entire group started smoking ICE to start with and they almost all (except for one of the group) moved on to injecting it as the rush was more intense and you don't waste as much.

What are the negatives/positives of using 'ICE'?

Negatives:

- "Its extremely hard to get off"
- "Much more addictive than any other drug"
- "Affects your Mental Health quickly/Brings on psychosis"
- "Sleep deprivation/Makes you delusional"
- "It dehydrates your body/Ages you quicker/Rots your teeth"
- "You develop filthy habits like grinding your teeth, chewing on your tongue, picking your face, and OCD like behaviors"
- "It burns when it is injected"
- "You sweat profusely, and you can smell it through your sweat, a really strong Meth odor"
- "You hardly have any friends, more so just drug acquaintances"
- "Ice ruins relationships, finances, actually it messes with your whole life"

Positives:

- "Much stronger/Longer lasting effects/Therefore better value for money"
- "Intense 'RUSH', More energy, Helps motivate you, Makes it easier to get through day to day things, Gives you more confidence"
- "Can be really good for work until you 'CRASH'"

- “It acts as a temporary cover for individual problems for the time that your high ‘**Band Aid Solution**’ ”
- “It helps with depression by boosting up energy levels” another ‘**Band Aid Solution**’ ”

What information would you have liked to know about ‘ICE’ before you started using?

- “That it is extremely hard to get off, and has really intense withdrawals”
- “It rots your teeth, ages you quicker, dehydrates your body”
- “It brings on psychosis, affects your Mental Health quickly, deprives you of sleep”
- “You become delusional, and makes you dwell on things”
- “You become careless and aggressive”
- “You get bad habits –picking your face, grinding your teeth, chewing your tongue etc”
- “You can’t eat while on it, therefore you become a skeleton.”
- “You still crave it badly even years after giving up.”
- “You will sacrifice all of the thing you used to love(eg surfing, skiing etc) just to use ICE”
- “Long term and short term psychological affects”
- “What is in Ice, how is it manufactured”

In what way has ‘ICE’ affected your MH or impacted on your life?

- “Ice fucks everything good in your life”
- “It sends you broke”
- “It ruins relationships”
- “It makes you selfish”
- “You find yourself always chasing the drug”
- “You develop OCD like behaviors”
- “It craps all over your life”
- “It messes with your MH and health(makes you delusional, hallucinate, you feel depressed without it, severe anxiety) sleep deprivation, rots your teeth, it makes you disgustingly underweight/undernourished, it ages you dramatically, and it gives you really bad skin”
- “There are no real positive impacts on your life”

What was the duration of your ICE use before you started to notice the negative impact it was having on your life?

- One participant stated that it took 10 years to have a negative impact on her life
- Another stated that it took 3-4years to have a negative impact on his life
- Four participants stated that it was much quicker for them to notice these ill effects as things started to go wrong within 3-4 months.
- Two participants stated they felt it within 2 month.

The first few time were fine, however even weekend use can get way out of control. “If you can manage to keep structure in your day to day life you will usually be able to sustain a fairly healthy drug habit”. Jobs take your mind off the negative affects.

Have you ever managed to stop using Amphetamines? Once you decided to stop using, how long did it take you to stop for a significant amount of time?

“I completed rehab easy, I was out for 2-5 days and I was back to my old ways”

“Rehab was hard, but I managed to do the full stint, however when I got back home it was a different story and I started to use the first day back”

“I tried numerous times to stop, I am now 25 months clean yet I still get severe craving from time to time when I get stressed”

“I tend to drink heavily when I can’t get on, drinking keeps my mind off Amphetamines”

“We tend to use Benzo’s and Cannabis when we can’t get on”

“Getting arrested was the best thing that could have happened to me as I got my shit together”

What treatment options are you aware of that can be helpful in the treatment of amphetamine type substance use?

“Detox, Rehab, Counselling, Bup/Methadone has helped my anxiety, no other pharmacotherapy”

“Detox and rehab can really help, however you need the right support through counselling, meetings and from your family to help you get through it”.

Which, if any of these treatment options have you accessed?

Detox- most of the group has gone through detox a number of times.

Rehab- a few of the group has managed to complete rehab, some have only managed to last a few weeks in the controlled environment.

Counselling- most of the group has accessed counselling through Directions ACT, it helped them make informed choices, to deal with the problems they had before they started using, and helps when trying to get into other services eg Rehab/Detox, Mental Health, Liver clinic etc

NSP’s- can be helpful for info on using safely, clean equipment, and what to be cautious about

Which of these treatment options did you feel were helpful to you? Any particular service? All Of The Above

DIRECTIONS ACT, ADP, Methadone Clinic
Karralika, ManCare, Arcadia House etc

Do you feel informed about local Drug and Alcohol services?

- 5 of the group feel well informed of the local AOD services and have accessed most of the agencies in ACT.
- 3 of the group is aware of the larger organizations eg DIRECTIONS ACT, ADP, Methadone Program etc however would like to know of more options

Do you have any suggestions about how Directions ACT might better assist Amphetamine users?

- Better access to Mental Health Services
- Better access to Doctors and other health sectors

Quotes From The Focus Group

“ICE is a DEATH SENTENCE”

“ICE makes you dwell on things, making the problem worse and more distorted”

“Even after you have come down and straighten up, your delusions still seem real and you begin to question yourself”

“I was a passive person before I started using ICE, even now that I have been clean for 25 months I still feel very aggressive”

“ICE is not an easy ride, it’s bumpy all the way”

“ICE should be called no friends”

“The best thing that happened was when I got arrested, the best wake up call I could have had”