

Drug regulations work to cut 'ice' use

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Credit: Jessica Lucia <http://www.flickr.com/people/theloushe/>

Regulations that control chemicals used to make the drug 'ice' work, but they come at a cost, according to new research published today in the journal *Addiction*.

Lead author Dr. Rebecca McKetin from the Center for Mental Health Research at The Australian National University said the paper reviewed the results of credible studies on the impacts of what are known as 'precursor regulations'. These regulations control access to the chemicals used to make ice, including pseudoephedrine, the active ingredient in cold-and-flu tablets.

"There is strong evidence that these regulations can work," Dr. McKetin said. "Research studies conducted in North America show that precursor regulations can reduce methamphetamine-related problems by up to 77 per cent."

Methamphetamine, aka 'ice' is a highly addictive [drug](#) that affects somewhere between 14 and 53 million people globally. The drug is notorious for causing psychosis, leading to paranoia and outbursts of aggressive behaviour in users.

“Methamphetamine use is a long-standing problem in Australia, where we have one of the highest rates of use in the developed world, although this has declined over the past few years. It’s not clear whether this decline is due to precursor regulations,” Dr. McKetin said.

“One thing that is clear is that where there is a profit to be made, criminals will find a way of circumventing the regulations. Criminals are turning to developing countries as ‘havens’ for drug manufacturing, where regulations are lax, and we are seeing a burgeoning drug manufacture in places like Iran, South Africa and Central America.

“There has also been a proliferation of new synthetic drugs like mephedrone, the drug ‘meow meow’.”

While the research revealed positive support for the introduction of precursor regulations to curb the methamphetamine problem, there were some associated negative impacts as well.

“One of the main problems is the inconvenience to consumers who have restricted access to effective cold-and-flu tablets.

“There has been little attention toward how these regulations impact on the legitimate consumption of cold-and-flu tablets, and this is something that really ought to be looked at.”

Provided by Australian National University

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