

Most meth users too embarrassed to seek treatment

October 31 2016, by Craig Cumming



Credit: University of Western Australia

The biggest barriers to methamphetamine users seeking treatment are embarrassment or stigma, belief that help is not needed, preferring to withdraw without help and privacy concerns, according to a new study.

The research, published in the journal *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, was led by Craig Cumming, from The University of Western Australia's School of Population Health, with researchers from the University of Melbourne and National Drug Research Institute at Curtin University. It is being presented today at the APSAD Scientific Alcohol and Drugs Conference in Sydney.

The research team reviewed 11 studies carried out in five countries –

Australia, US, UK, South Africa and China – and analysed the prevalence of barriers to treatment.

Methamphetamine use is linked to a range of poor health, social and justice outcomes in many parts of the world. Recent increases in methamphetamine use and supply have led to concern for authorities around the world.

Mr Cumming said the benefits of treatment for substance abuse far outweighed the costs when compared to improvements in health, social and justice outcomes and related economic costs.

He said [social stigma](#) and shame/embarrassment associated with accessing treatment could be exacerbated by media campaigns that sensationalised the negative health, social and criminal issues associated with methamphetamine use and could be more likely to stigmatise, rather than help users.

Advertising campaigns that used shock or fear tactics with the aim of changing behaviour needed to emphasise the treatment options available in order to be effective.

"What our study shows is that any kind of intervention that encourages users to seek treatment needs to target these major barriers and particularly those that address and reduce the stigma associated with meth use," he said.

"Meth users often also experience [mental health problems](#) so there also needs to be greater integration between alcohol and other drug support and [mental health services](#)."

Provided by University of Western Australia

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