

ADDRESSING METHAMPHETAMINE - SEATTLE / KING COUNTY

SUMMARY PAPER - JUNE 2020

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Methamphetamine: an illicit, psycho stimulant drug that is also referred to as meth, blue, ice, and crystal.¹ Acting on the central nervous system, methamphetamine causes increased libido, alertness and well-being, decreased appetite, and euphoria.² The psychological effects of increased use are often referred to as methamphetamine-induced psychosis. The long-term effects of methamphetamine use vary but can be correlated with problematic sexual behavior and commitment of law violations.^{3, 4}

Local Methamphetamine Trends:

- 2019: the majority of all overdose deaths in King County involved methamphetamine use;⁵
- 2019: stimulants solely caused the second highest number of overdose deaths in King County with the majority being from methamphetamine use.⁵

(Centering voices of those most impacted) 2019 King County needle exchange survey: **61% of methamphetamine users identified a desire for medication as treatment for their use disorder.**⁷

Funding proposal: local government resources to fund a stimulant substitution therapy research pilot by centering client outcomes and testing the efficacy of prescribing methylphenidate for addressing methamphetamine use disorder.

Stimulant substitution therapy: an innovative, cutting-edge treatment modality for methamphetamine use disorder that uses medication treatment by providing a safer pharmaceutical that acts as an agonist for reducing illicit, problematic methamphetamine use.

Stimulant substitution therapy research

- 2013: use of methylphenidate simultaneously reduced reliance or relapse of methamphetamine use while also addressing attention disorders.⁸
- 2014: methylphenidate may lead to a reduction in methamphetamine use when provided as a treatment for individuals.⁹
- 2015: methylphenidate was safe, well tolerated among active methamphetamine users, and significantly reduced methamphetamine use, craving and depressive symptoms.¹⁰
- 2020: methylphenidate included as one of the most consistent positive findings for addressing problematic methamphetamine use out of 43 pharmacology studies.¹¹

Stimulant substitution therapy clinical practice

- Dextroamphetamine is successfully used as an evidence based treatment for stimulant use disorder at Crosstown Clinic in Vancouver, B.C.¹²

Racial impact considerations: The effects of the opioid crisis experienced by white individuals garnered compassionate responses, while the Black experience of the crack epidemic garnered a far more punitive response. In 2019, Black individuals accounted for 21% of fatal overdoses from stimulant use disorder⁵ while only making up 6% of King County's total population in the last Census count¹³. In contrast, white folks in 2019 were 66% of the total overdoses from stimulants,⁵ proportionate to the 65% of the county's population that is white¹³.

Other strategies and interventions: housing prioritization; eviction mitigation; day spaces; safer consumption practices; safe consumption spaces.

a COVID –19 response: British Columbia, Canada, included stimulant substitution therapy in their governmental **directive** for addressing the dual public health emergencies of COVID-19 and the drug epidemic to increase practices of social distancing and self-isolation. Stimulant substitution therapy can reduce drug contamination and decrease illicit procurement and use, which increases opportunities for isolation and distancing.¹⁴ Additionally, COVID has disrupted the illegal drug market meaning a legal safe supply is necessary for drug user health.¹⁵



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