

A communication periodical for our clients, staff & the community at large

The Chronicle

A Paterson Counseling Center Newsletter

Special points of interest:

- PCC Updates WebSite with More Links and Information About Services
- PCC makes Case for Expanding Services For Women and Children
- QPA Phase Assessment Completed For 1st Qtr
- PCC Can Help Treat You for Addiction To Prescription Drugs

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Prescription Drug Abuse and Addiction

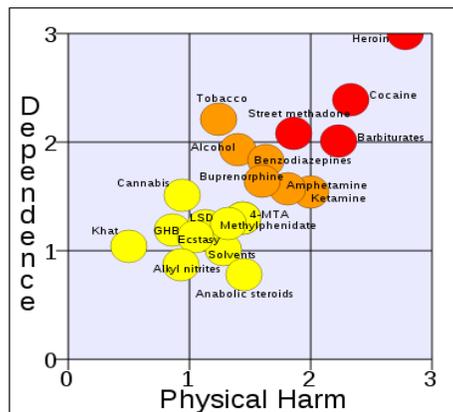
Prescription drugs are the second most commonly abused category of drugs, behind marijuana and ahead of cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine and other drugs. The National Institutes of Health estimates that nearly 20 percent of people in the United States have used prescription drugs for non-medical reasons.

Some prescription drugs can become addictive, especially when they are used in a manner inconsistent with their labeling or for reasons they were not prescribed. Those include narcotic painkillers like OxyContin or Vicodin, sedatives and tranquilizers like Xanax or Valium, and stimulants like Dexedrine, Adderall or Ritalin.

Steroid abuse is also on the rise. Steroids are prescription drugs that are legally prescribed to treat a variety of medical conditions that cause loss of lean muscle mass, such as cancer and AIDS. Men consistently report higher rates of steroid use than women. In 2008, 2.5 percent of 12th grade males, versus 0.6 percent of 12th grade females, reported taking the drugs in the past year.

In 2000, about 43 percent of hospital emergency admissions for drug overdoses (nearly 500,000 people) happened because of misused prescription drugs. This type of drug abuse is increasing partially because of the availability of drugs, including online pharmacies that make it easier to get the drugs without a prescription, even for minors.

There may also be a perception, especially among younger people, that prescription drugs are safer than illegal street drugs. Most people don't lock up their prescription medications, nor do they discard them when they are no longer needed for their intended use, making them vulnerable to theft or misuse.



Prescription drug abuse is generally the same between men and women, except among 12 to 17 year olds. In this age group, research conducted by the National Institute on Drug Abuse found that females are more likely to use psychotherapeutic drugs for non-medical purposes. Research has also shown that women in general are more likely to use narcotic pain relievers and tranquilizers for non-medical purposes.

The number of teens and young adults (ages 12 to 25) who were new abusers of prescription painkillers grew from 400,000 in the mid-'80s to 2 million in 2000, according to a study by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. New misusers of tranquilizers, which are normally used to treat anxiety or tension, increased nearly 50 percent between 1999 and 2000 alone.

In a study of students in Wisconsin and Minnesota, 34 percent of kids diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) said they had been approached to sell or trade their Ritalin or Adderall, two drugs commonly used to treat symptoms of ADHD.

The growing population of aging Baby Boomers are also prime candidates for prescription drug abuse, intentional or not, as are the elderly. Once someone begins taking a number of pills for things

Prescription Continued

like managing blood pressure and cholesterol, it becomes easier to take narcotic pain killers, prescription sleep aids and other, more addictive drugs. It also increases the risk of negative and possibly fatal interactions between drugs, especially when they are not used as prescribed.

Drug addiction is a biological, pathological process that alters how the brain functions. Prolonged drug use changes the brain in fundamental and long-lasting ways. These long-lasting changes are a major component of the addiction itself. It is as though there is a figurative "switch" in the brain that "flips" at some point during an individual's drug use. The point at which this "flip" occurs varies from individual to individual, but the effect of this change is the transformation of a drug abuser to a drug addict.

What is Crystal Meth?

Crystal methamphetamine is a colorless, odorless form of d-methamphetamine, a powerful and highly addictive synthetic (man-made) stimulant. Crystal methamphetamine typically resembles small fragments of glass or shiny blue-white "rocks" of various sizes. Like powdered methamphetamine (another form of d-methamphetamine), crystal methamphetamine is abused because of the long-lasting euphoric effects it produces. Crystal methamphetamine, however, typically has a higher purity level and may produce even longer-lasting and more intense physiological effects than the powdered form of the drug.

How is it abused?

Crystal methamphetamine typically is smoked using glass pipes similar to pipes used to smoke crack cocaine. Crystal methamphetamine also may be injected. A user who smokes or injects the drug immediately experiences an intense sensation followed by a high that may last 12 hours or more.

Who uses crystal methamphetamine?

Crystal methamphetamine is used by individuals of all ages and is increasingly gaining in popularity as a club drug. It is difficult to determine how many individuals in the United States use crystal methamphetamine because most illicit drug use surveys do not distinguish between crystal methamphetamine and powdered methamphetamine. Those surveys that do draw such a distinction reveal that use of crystal methamphetamine is prevalent. According to the University of Michigan's Monitoring the Future Survey, nearly 5 percent of high school seniors in the United States used crystal methamphetamine at least once in their lifetime and 3 percent used the drug in the past year.

What are the risks?

Crystal methamphetamine use is associated with numerous serious physical problems. The drug can cause rapid heart rate, increased blood pressure, and damage to the small blood vessels in the brain--which can lead to stroke. Chronic use of the drug can result in inflammation of the heart lining. Overdoses can cause hyperthermia (elevated body temperature), convulsions, and death.

Individuals who use crystal methamphetamine also may have episodes of violent behavior, paranoia, anxiety, confusion, and insomnia. The drug can produce psychotic symptoms that persist for months or years after an individual has stopped using the drug.

Crystal methamphetamine users who inject the drug expose themselves to additional risks, including contracting HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), hepatitis B and C, and other blood-borne viruses. Chronic users who inject methamphetamine also risk scarred or collapsed veins, infections of the heart lining and valves, abscesses, pneumonia, tuberculosis, and liver or kidney disease.