

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC AND CLINICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF METHAMPHETAMINE *SHABU* USERS IN BARCELONA

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INTRODUCTION

Crystal methamphetamine use is a major public health concern due to the neurotoxic and neurocognitive effects on its users. Among the community of Philippine immigrants in Spain, its consumption is common and it is often used as a “performance enhancer”. Little is known about the characteristics of *shabu* users.

The present study aims to analyze the sociodemographic, healthcare and clinical characteristics of patients using shabu who have been treated by the Psychiatry and Addiction Department of a tertiary hospital since 2016.

METHODS

We analyzed all the cases of patients with methamphetamine use disorder treated in the Psychiatry and Addiction Department of the Hospital del Mar in Barcelona-Spain since 2016. We collected sociodemographic variables, monitoring features and psychiatric comorbidity from the review of medical records.

RESULTS

A total of 32 cases with severe amphetamine (*shabu*) use disorder were identified. Patients were mostly from Philippines (23 cases, 72%). Twenty four were men (75%). At the beginning of the medical follow-up the average age was 37 years (range: 21-51 years). Regarding their marital status, 12 patients were married, 9 were single, 6 were separated and 5 were cohabiting. From total, 23 reported being unemployed (72%), 8 were employed and 1 was a student. Regarding their first consultation to Psychiatry department, 19 patients (59%) contacted in first term with the Emergency Department (18 Psychiatry emergencies and 1 General emergencies), 4 were referred from outpatient treatment centers, 3 were attended by the liaison addiction service during an admission at Cardiology and Neurology Services, respectively, 3 were referred from child protective service, 2 were referred from a Philippine Community Association, and 1 patient was referred from an outpatient psychiatry center.

In 23 cases methamphetamine use was confirmed by urine detection. Other psychiatric disorders were diagnosed in 26 (81%) patients: mainly psychotic disorders (23), and, in a minor extend, mood disorder (1), gambling disorder (1) and behavior disorder (1). Also, 2 patients presented severe cardiologic comorbidity (dilated cardiomyopathy and severe heart failure, probable induced by methamphetamine).

Twenty-six (81%) required hospital admission in acute psychiatric unit or in a dual diagnosis unit due to the severity of comorbid diagnosis.

CONCLUSIONS

Shabu is a methamphetamine drug used mainly in the Philippine community in Spain. Patients consulting to health services for *shabu* addiction are mainly young men, that use the drug in a social and private context. The high prevalence in emergency consults compared to outpatient consults, suggests a low risk perception by users. Some patients presented severe psychotic symptoms and severe medical conditions that ended in hospital admissions. Health staff should be aware of the effects of this substance to detect patients with addiction.

References.

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Table 1. Main characteristics of *shabu* users.

		N=32
Males n (%)		24 (75)
Females n (%)		8 (25)
Age mean (SD)		37 (8)
Country of birth, n (%)		
	Philippines	23 (72)
	Algerie	1 (3)
	Senegal	1 (3)
	Bangladesh	1 (3)
	Chile	1 (3)
	China	2 (6)
	Spain	2 (6)
	Brasil	1 (3)
Marital status, n (%)		
	Single	9 (28)
	Married	12 (37)
	Separated	6 (19)
	Cohabiting	5 (16)
Occupation, n (%)		
	Employed	8 (25)
	Unemployed	23 (72)
	Other	1 (3)
Smoked route of administration, n (%)		32 (100)
MA in urine, n (%)		23 (72)
Psychiatric comorbidity, n (%)		26 (81)
	Psychotic disorders	23 (72)
	Mood disorders	1 (3)
	Gambling disorder	1 (3)
	Behaviour disorder	1 (3)
Origin of first consultation to psychiatry, n (%)		
	Psychiatry emergencies	18 (56)
	General emergencies	1 (3)
	Liaison addiction service	3 (9)
	Outpatient treatment centers	4 (13)
	Outpatient psychiatry center	1 (3)
	Child protective service	3 (9)
	Philippine Community Association	2 (7)

MA: Methamphetamine. SD: Standard deviation