

FIRST PSYCHOTIC EPISODES IN SMOKED METHAMPHETAMINE USERS: PATTERNS OF USE AND CLINICAL FEATURES

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Introduction

Methamphetamines and amphetamines are the second world’s most widely used drugs just after Cannabis. Although methamphetamines are not commonly consumed in Spain (0.6% prevalence in general population), the number of patients seeking treatment for these substances in Barcelona has been increasing since 2016. Also the number of psychiatry admissions in psychiatry units due to psychotic syndromes in people using smoked methamphetamines has increased.

Objective

The aim of this study is to describe demographic data and clinical features of a sample of patients with a first episode of psychosis and concomitant methamphetamine use admitted in Parc de Salut Mar.

Methods

Those patients admitted for first episode of psychosis and methamphetamine use to any unit of psychiatric hospitalization of Parc de Salut Mar (Dual Diagnosis Unit, Acute Psychiatric Unit, Detoxification Unit) have been included; also, patients that have been attended in Psychiatric Emergencies, but not hospitalized, have been included in the analysis. Clinical and demographic data were collected from the review of medical records.

Results

The final sample included 26 patients (80.8% males, mean age 35 years) (Table 1). The majority of them were born in Philippines (73,1%), followed by China (7,7%) and Brasil (7,7%). Asiatic patients reported the use of *shabu* (a smoked methamphetamine, used mainly to endure long work shifts) while patients from Brasil reported use of *tina* (a smoked methamphetamine with recreational use often related with sexual activities). Patients were living with their partners (53,8%). Only the 3,8 % had familiar history of psychosis. The most frequent diagnose was non-specified psychosis (42,3%), followed by methamphetamine induced psychosis (34,6%). Regarding the unit of hospitalization, 17 were admitted in Dual Diagnosis Unit, 4 in Acute Psychiatric Unit, 4 in Psychiatric Emergencies and 1 in Detoxification Unit. Nine patients were readmitted during the studied period, 4 of them more than 3 times, due to relapse in both addictive and psychotic symptoms. The average duration of the admission was 16 days. During their first admission for first psychotic episode, just 9 patients were discharged during the first week, while 3 patients needed more than a month of hospitalization.

Conclusions

Smoked methamphetamine is mostly consumed by the Philippine community in Barcelona. Severe psychotic symptoms related to the use of methamphetamine are frequent. Despite of remaining drug-free period during the hospitalization period, psychotic symptoms persisted for more than a week in most of the admitted patients, longer than expected in substance induced psychosis, showing greater similarity to primary psychiatric syndromes. Moreover, it should be noted that the majority of patients admitted were immigrants and with a pattern of use of the substance different from recreational, as most of the patients describe the use of methamphetamine to endure long work shifts. Both factors should be taken into account for an appropriate therapeutic approach and individualized addiction treatment.

References

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Table 1. Demographic and clinical data

n=26	
Male n (%)	21 (80,8)
Age mean (SD)	
Country of birth n (%)	
Philippines	19 (73,1)
Brazil	2 (7,7)
China	2 (7,7)
Algeria	1 (3,8)
Bangladesh	1 (3,8)
Chile	1 (3,8)
Marital status n (%)	
Single	6 (23,1)
Married	9 (34,6)
Separated	6 (23,1)
Cohabiting	5 (19,2)
Familiar history of psychosis n (%)	1 (3,8)
Diagnosis	
Psychotic Disorder not otherwise specified	11 (42,8)
Methamphetamine-induced psychotic disorder	9 (34,6)
Methamphetamine-related disorder not otherwise specified	2 (7,7)
Paranoid Schizophrenia	1 (3,8)
Delusional Disorder	1 (3,8)
Poisoning by methamphetamine	2 (7,7)
Unit of hospitalization	
Dual Diagnosis Unit	17 (65,4)
Acute Psychiatric Unit	4 (15,4)
Psychiatric Emergencies	4 (15,4)
Detoxification Unit	1 (3,8)
Readmission n (%)	9 (34,6)
Days of hospitalization mean (SD)	16 (18)
< 7 days n (%)	9 (34,6)
7- 30 days n (%)	14 (53,8)
> 30 days n (%)	3 (11,5)

SD: Standard deviation.

Financial support: Instituto de Salud Carlos III–FEDER-Red de Trastornos Adictivos UE-FEDER 2016 RD16/0017/0010; AGAUR-Suport Grups de Recerca (2017 SGR530); and Acció instrumental d'Intensificació de Professionals de la Salut - Facultatius especialistes (PERIS: SLT006/17/00014).

