MULTIPLE TRUTHS ABOUT CRYSTAL METH AMONG YOUTH IN AN URBAN DRUG SCENE

BACKGROUND & METHOD

• We wanted to find out how young people themselves understood and experienced their crystal methamphetamine (meth) use over time in Vancouver.
• We talked to a group of young people about their meth use and any changes in their meth use across a six-year study period.
• We also did fieldwork in the places where they lived, worked, and socialized.

QUICK FACT

CRYSTAL METH USE AMONG YOUTH IS INCREASING WORLDWIDE.

FINDINGS

• Young people told us positive things about meth use, such as how meth allowed them to “be productive” and “feel more normal” (e.g., by looking for ways to make money, socializing with friends).
• Some young people used meth to get themselves off of, or reduce their use of, heroin and crack cocaine. Youth also used meth to treat mental health issues (e.g., depression).
• Young people also told us negative things about meth use, such as its negative effects on physical appearance. They also made a connection between meth use and engagement in more reckless levels of crime.
• Over time, negative consequences caused some youth to quit or reduce meth use. Others continued to use meth, explaining that they didn’t think they could “even function” on the streets without it.

IMPLICATIONS

• Recognizing these truths about meth will help us tailor interventions to fit with young people’s experiences and needs.
• It is important to consider innovative treatment programs for meth use, and approaches to promoting mental health among youth.