



## METHAMPHETAMINE INJECTION AND HEPATITIS C VIRUS AMONG STREET YOUTH

### BACKGROUND & METHOD

- Street-involved youth represent one of the most marginalized and stigmatized populations worldwide. Often these young people have fled violent homes and now face the dangers of life on the street. Many turn to injection drugs as a coping strategy.
- Most new hepatitis C virus (HCV) infections in North America are linked to injection drug use. It's been estimated that, among street-involved youth who use injection drugs, the average time from injection initiation to HCV infection is 1 to 2 years.
- Researchers investigated the connections between injection drug use and HCV infection among street-involved youth in Vancouver.
- For this study, more than 500 street-involved youth were interviewed and tested for the HCV antibody.

### FINDINGS

- Almost half of the study's participants said they injected drugs, and nearly 30% of those who reported injection drug use tested positive for the hepatitis C virus.
- The young injection drug users who were most likely to test positive were those who had been injecting the longest and those who injected heroin or crystal methamphetamine at least once a day.

### QUICK FACT

*NEARLY 30% OF PARTICIPANTS WHO REPORTED INJECTION DRUG USE TESTED POSITIVE FOR THE HEPATITIS C VIRUS.*

### IMPLICATIONS

- The rise in use of injection drugs such as crystal methamphetamine and the level of HCV prevalence among street-involved youth are causes for concern.
- This study highlights the need for evidence-based prevention and treatment strategies designed specifically for this marginalized and underserved population.

Miller CL, Kerr T, Fischer B, Zhang R, Wood E. **Methamphetamine injection independently predicts hepatitis C infection among street-involved youth in a Canadian setting.** *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 2009; 44(3): 302-304.

