



NO EVIDENCE OF METH-VIOLENCE LINK AMONG VANCOUVER STREET YOUTH

BACKGROUND & METHOD

- Methamphetamine (meth) is a powerful central nervous system stimulant that can cause serious health problems when used excessively. Meth use can also lead to sleep deprivation, paranoia, delusions, and other conditions that may result in outbursts of violent behaviour.
- While media reports often link meth with violence, scientific evidence of this claimed association is lacking.
- To investigate the possible association between violence and methamphetamine use, researchers asked 478 Vancouver street-involved youth about their experiences with drugs, alcohol, and violence.

QUICK FACT

DAILY METHAMPHETAMINE USERS WERE NEITHER MORE NOR LESS LIKELY THAN OTHERS TO SUFFER OR PERPETUATE VIOLENCE.

FINDINGS

- The researchers found a disturbingly high rate of violence among this group, with nearly half saying they had suffered some form of violence in the previous six months, and more than a third reporting having physically attacked or assaulted someone during the same time period.
- Surprisingly, though, they found that daily meth users were neither more nor less likely than others in the group to suffer or perpetrate violence.
- However, the researchers did find evidence to confirm what previous studies had already shown, that there is a strong association between violence and the use of alcohol.

IMPLICATIONS

- Contrary to popular media reports, this study found no causal link between methamphetamine use and violence.
- The association of alcohol with violence, though, has implications for screening and intervention programs.

Martin I, Palepu A, Wood E, Li K, Montaner J, Kerr T. **Violence among street-involved youth: The role of methamphetamine.** *European Addiction Research*, 2009; 15(1): 32-38.

