

# Drug Use and Substitution Treatment in Thailand

[Usaneya Perngparn](#), [Vichai Poshyachinda](#), [Catherine Pilley](#)

Institute of Health Research, Chulalongkorn University.

## ABSTRACT

There have been three major pieces of legislation in the 20th Century concerning the control of drugs. I.e. Thailand Act of B.E. 2502 banning opium, Thailand Act of B.E. 2518 principally ratifying the International Convention of Psychotropic Substances, and Thailand Act of B.E. 2539 rescheduling amphetamine to the same category as heroin.

Of those using drugs in Thailand, the majority in treatment during the 1960s used heroin. Since 1997, however, there has been large increase in those seeking help for amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) use. Drug treatment ranges from herbal medicine to current developments in the use of methadone. The rehabilitation of ex-drug users is less developed than detoxification services. Very few treatment centers exist. Of those which do exist, most favour a therapeutic community approach to rehabilitation. Last year, the therapeutic community adjusted the expected duration of the program from 18 months to 4 months. Moreover, the country has adopted a Matrix Program to treat drug dependents, especially ATS users. The latter method is applied to almost all treatment service centres.

In terms of substitution treatment in Thailand, treatment can be applied in a number of ways. Although the emphasis is on moving people through treatment within four months in the Matrix Program, long-term methadone treatment has just been approved and supported by the amendment of Narcotic Act B.E. 2522. Hence long-term methadone treatment can be used in substitution treatment for heroin users. Equally the Matrix Program could become the major treatment for ATS users. Evaluation studies remain relatively undeveloped which leads perhaps to a weakness in overall knowledge and a subsequent difficulty in applying appropriate treatment methods.

### Key words:

14<sup>th</sup> International Conference on the reduction of drug related harm, 6-10 april 2003