

Future Outlook of HIV Infection among The Substance Population in Thailand

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ABSTRACT

Heroin dependence had dominated the substance abuse scene for more than three decades. However during the 1990s. the abuse of illicit stimulant which had always appeared concurrently in small proportion spread widely and extensively. Finally in the latter half of the 1990s the stimulant abuse population expanded dramatically and most likely superceded the heroin dependence population. In the new drug dependent treatment population, student reporting stimulant use increased from 2.6% in 1991 to 36.1% in 2000. More than half of the rest unemployed and the wage labour population. Methamphetamine (MA) is the principal active ingredient in the illicit stimulant tablet in varying combination with ephedrine and caffeine. Inhaling the fume from heating stimulant tablet was the main route of administration in more than 90% of the cases. Illicit drug seizure statistics, other enforcement statistics on drug use in rave parties and a few research studies strongly suggested that recreational use of ecstasy is becoming more common. MA, ecstasy and ketamine use for recreation among diverse population is apparently an emerging drug abuse scene. While, the perennial heroin dependence and MA use situation showed little evidence of being successfully controlled.

The national HIV prevalence surveillance system which conducted serum testing the annual intravenous drug users (IVDU) sampling from all drug dependence treatment units in December clearly indicated that the HIV prevalence trend remained high at the level of about 40-50% throughout the latter half of the 1990s. However the prevalence was more specific to heroin user population. HIV prevalence specific to stimulant user in treatment remains fairly low between 1-3%. " Evidences from qualitative studies among the student. seamen, commercial sex worker and stimulant users in treatment demonstrated various dimensions of impact from MA and ecstasy use on recreation and sexual behaviour. Common findings were for example the believe and direct experience that MA and ecstasy stimulate sexual desire. markedly increase the fun of participating in parties. eliminate the shame and shyness in case of commercial sex practice. Interestingly, reports from the

commercial sex worker using MA frequently referred to impotence under increased sexual desire behaviour of the client.

The emerging trend of increase stimulant use in recreation in concurrent with the increase availability and diversity of illicit indicate an important expansion of the role of substance abuse in HIV transmission. In long-term consideration, this new development may be more critical than the encapsulated role of IVDU in view of the prevention and impact of HIV/AIDS as a severe indigenous communicable disease.

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