

BARRIERS & ENABLERS TO THE PROVISION OF STRUCTURED HEALTHCARE TO PEOPLE WHO REGULARLY USE METHAMPHETAMINE IN GENERAL PRACTICE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY (IN PROGRESS)

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Introduction / Issues: The most recent National Drug Strategy Household Survey demonstrated a drop in people reporting amphetamine use in the last 12 months. However it also noted an increase since the last Survey in both purity (mainly due to increased prevalence of the crystalline form of methamphetamine), and respondents using at least weekly. Evidence for harms to both physical and mental health not related to intoxication from regular methamphetamine use is growing, and the above pattern suggests a smaller proportion of users possibly exposing themselves to greater risk of adverse health outcomes. There is evidence that people who regularly use methamphetamine (PWRUM) visit their General Practitioner (GP) more frequently than the general population. But many will not disclose their drug use and therefore it won't be taken into account by the GP when planning the patient's care.

Method / Approach: Qualitative study using semi-structured interviews of GPs (Phase 1) & PWRUM (Phase 2). GPs will be recruited through the local Primary Health Network, online & local networks. PWRUM will be recruited through high case-load substance use disorder GPs and NGOs targeting that group.

Key Findings: The range of barriers and enablers will be analysed using appropriate validated models, such as those describing access to care, the doctor-patient relationship and stigma. Ethics approval has been given for Phase 1 and interviews will commence in May 2019. Approval for Phase 2 is anticipated in the coming months.

Implications for Practice or Policy: We know that PWRUM face significant health risks through use of methamphetamine. By identifying the barriers and enablers faced by them in the GP setting, where we know they frequently present, we can design better models of, and approaches to, care to meet the needs of this group.

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