

Facilitating engagement with counselling for methamphetamine treatment – perspectives of clinicians and consumers

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Introduction: Psychosocial treatment is the first-line approach to supporting people who use methamphetamine but engagement remains inconsistent. We conducted qualitative interviews with consumers and clinicians, focused on optimising treatment engagement. This presentation highlights approaches that may facilitate engagement but also contrasts the views of consumers and clinicians. These findings are relevant to clinicians who wish to enhance clinical care by adapting their treatment approach to this population.

Approach: We conducted a focus group with consumers ($n = 5$) and individual interviews with clinicians ($n = 15$), using a semi-structured interview approach. Broadly, consumers were asked to describe clinical approaches that increased their likelihood of remaining engaged in therapy, and clinicians described adaptations to their practice to support this group and maintain engagement.

Key Findings: Flexibility emerged as an important theme across both groups, and was expressed in the timing of sessions (both groups), collaboration in treatment goals (consumers), and accommodating complex needs (e.g., opportunistic contact with clients, support around comorbidity; clinicians). A prominent theme, raised primarily by consumers, was the importance of authenticity, pacing, and a non-judgemental approach to facilitate gradual change. While clinicians reported implementing several in-session adaptations (e.g., repetition, content between sessions), such strategies were not included in consumer descriptions of engagement facilitators.

Discussions and Conclusions: Consumers described several approaches that may increase engagement, though these were all underpinned by the clinician's investment in the consumer (an over-arching theme). Clinicians similarly emphasised investment in the consumer, though also described the importance of practical strategies and supports in therapy.

Implications for Practice: These findings illustrate a contrast between strategies based on clinical experience and lived experience. This presentation will explore these differences and their implications for practical retention strategies in this population. Additionally, we will describe how these mechanisms of engagement might be measured in future research.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: This work was supported by AR's NCCRED Clinical Research Fellowship (2020)