

Treatment-seeking in stimulant users: The role of biosocial cognitive factors

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Introduction and Aims: *Physical, psychiatric and social problems arising from stimulant use continue to grow globally¹. Few individuals engaged in problematic stimulant use seek treatment^{2,3} and little is known about what motivates treatment-seeking. This study investigated motivation to seek treatment among stimulant users. Given the demonstrated strength of bioSocial Cognitive Theory (bSCT) factors in behaviour change^{4,5,6,7,8}, differences in impulsivity, drug outcome expectancies, refusal self-efficacy, and other psychological factors between treatment seekers and non-treatment seekers were examined.*

Design and Methods: *Assessment data were obtained from 151 stimulant users attending a specialist addiction outpatient clinic. 73.5% used meth/amphetamines, 19.2% used cocaine. Treatment seekers (n=54) voluntarily attended a stimulant treatment program. Non-treatment seekers (n=97) attended for assessment and brief intervention as part of an illicit drug diversion program. Independent samples t-tests were conducted to examine differences between groups.*

Results: *Treatment seekers reported lower stimulant refusal self-efficacy, higher negative outcome expectancies, and greater dependence severity than non-treatment seekers (ps < .001). Treatment seekers also reported greater psychological distress (somatic symptoms, anxiety, and depression), and higher rash impulsiveness and positive outcome expectancies (ps < .05). Differences in positive expectancies and psychological distress became non-significant in the meth/amphetamine-only subgroup.*

Discussions and Conclusions: *Low refusal self-efficacy, high rash impulsiveness and negative expectancies, and dependence severity may play an important role in treatment-seeking among stimulant users.*

Implications for Practice or Policy: *Assessment of bSCT factors could inform brief interventions seeking to motivate stimulant patients to enter treatment. For example, patients reporting low dependence severity or negative expectancies may benefit from discussion that elicits reflection on the undesired consequences of their stimulant use.*

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