

Shifts in drug injected at the Sydney Medically Supervised Injecting Centre (MSIC) and implications for service provision.

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Introduction: Consistent with national trends [1, 2], heroin injecting at the Medically Supervised Injecting Centre (MSIC) shows ongoing decline and methamphetamine use continues to increase. Media portrayals of meth/amphetamine use have linked it with aggressive behaviour. This study aimed to characterise trends in amphetamine injecting among MSIC clients and investigate any association with behavioural incidents onsite.

Methods: MSIC retains anonymised data on client visits, including drug injected and details of aggressive behaviour. Data were analysed for the period 2001 to 2021. Clients were grouped into exclusively injected amphetamines, exclusively injected other drugs, or injected multiple drugs. Trends in exclusive vs multiple drug use are described and association with behavioural incidents explored.

Results: The proportion of clients who inject amphetamines increased between 2001 and 2021 - exclusive annual amphetamine use grew from 4.8% of clients in 2001 to 38.7% in 2021; exclusive other drug use declined from 89.6% to 29.0%; and multiple drugs use grew from 5.6% to 32.4%. The pattern of amphetamine injecting varies by annual visit frequency. Clients who attend the service infrequently exclusively inject either amphetamines or other drugs. Clients who attend the service frequently inject multiple drugs. There are no apparent differences in drug exclusivity with regard to age, gender or Indigenous status. There is a mean of 2 incidents of challenging behaviour per month and incidents have decreased over time. There is no apparent association between challenging behaviour and amphetamine injecting.

Discussions and Conclusions: Clients increasingly report amphetamines as the drug they intend to inject at MSIC, yet behavioural incidents at have decreased. This supports the notion that the setting of drug use influences client behavioural outcomes.

Implications for Practice: Behavioural incidents at the MSIC, regardless of drugs used, continue to be uncommon. Staff interaction with unsettled clients, guided by protocols and training, influence behavioural outcomes.

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