Gay Meth Use Accounts For 1 in 6 New HIV Cases in Seattle Area

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Crystal meth use among gay men in King County, Washington, which includes Seattle, accounts for an estimated 16 percent of new HIV transmissions, the National AIDS Treatment Advocacy Project reports. Researchers examined local epidemic and drug-use trends between 2009 and 2013 and presented their findings at the 8th International AIDS Society Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention in Vancouver, British Columbia.

An estimated 28 percent of men who have sex with men (MSM) diagnosed with HIV in King County during the study period used meth, compared with 13 percent of other people diagnosed with the virus.

In 2013, the HIV infection rate among at-risk MSM was 553 per 100,000. Among those men who did not use meth in the previous year, the estimated incidence was 441 per 100,000. The estimated HIV incidence among all meth users was 2,305 per 100,000. Meth-using MSM were 5.2 times more likely to be diagnosed with HIV than MSM who did not use the drug.

Surveys have shown that 3 to 10 percent of King County MSM report using meth. Among MSM newly diagnosed with HIV, the reported rate of meth use was between 23 and 28 percent.

With MSM accounting for 80 percent of new HIV diagnoses in King County, the researchers estimated that meth use among MSM accounts for 16 percent of all cases.

To read the NATAP article, click here.

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