Party Drug Use Waning in NYC Gay and Bisexual Men

December 6, 2007 By David Evans

The use of crystal methamphetamine and other party drugs, such as ecstasy, ketamine and GHB, has begun to decrease among gay and bisexual men in New York City, according to new study data presented at the 2007 National HIV Prevention Conference in Atlanta.

David Bimbi, of the Center for HIV/AIDS Educational Studies and Training (CHEST) at Hunter College in New York City, and his colleagues collected data from 5,861 gay and bisexual men recruited between 2002 and 2006 at major gay community events in New York City. The average age of the men was 37 years old. Most were gay-identified and 11.7 percent reported being HIV positive. Sixty-two percent of the men were Caucasian, 15 percent were Latino, 11 percent were African American and 6 were Asian or Pacific Islander.

Drug use varied somewhat by HIV status. Among the HIV-positive men, the use of crystal methamphetamine peaked in 2003 and 2004, when as many as 24 percent reported having used it, followed by a significant decline to 8 percent in 2006. The trend in cocaine use, however, went the opposite direction. Use of cocaine was highest among HIV-positive men in 2002, when 23 percent reported using it, dropped to 9 percent in 2004, and once again increased to 15 percent in 2006.

Among men who reported being HIV negative or who did not know their HIV status, use of crystal methamphetamine also climbed to a peak of 11 percent in 2003 and then declined to 4 percent in 2006. Use of cocaine in these men, however, did not undergo the same pattern as in the HIV-positive men. Rather, its use remained relatively unchanged from 2002 to 2006.

Use of ecstasy, ketamine and GHB dropped over the four-year period in men who were HIV negative or of unknown HIV status. Ecstasy use in HIV-positive men remained stable at around 15 percent, but use of ketamine and GHB both peaked at 14 percent and 13 percent respectively in 2003 and then dropped to 3 percent and 4 percent in 2006.

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