Crystal Meth May Fuel HIV Disease Progression and Transmission

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Crystal meth use appears to both spur HIV disease progression and increase the likelihood of transmission according to a recent study of HIV-positive men who have sex with men (MSM). The findings were presented at the Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI) in Boston and reported by the National AIDS Treatment Advocacy Project (NATAP).

Over the course of a year, researchers in San Diego studied 50 MSM, all of whom were taking antiretrovirals (ARVs) to treat HIV and had an undetectable viral load. Each month, the men completed questionnaires about their ARV adherence and party drug use.

The researchers defined meth use as having used at least once during the study. A total of 16 men reported meth use, 20 smoked pot, 13 did other club drugs, 12 drank alcohol and 11 did cocaine.

Those who used crystal meth had higher cytomegalovirus (CMV) in their semen, tended to have more HIV shedding in their semen and tended to have a worse CD4/CD8 ratio. There was no apparent difference in ARV adherence between those who did or did not use meth.

Compared with the nonusers, meth users had higher levels of activated CD4 cells as well as proliferating CD4 and CD8 cells. Users also had a higher indication of their viral reservoir levels.

To read the NATAP report, click here.

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/meth-disease-25392-7089