

# The Meth/HIV Connection

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# Meth + STDs

- Studies from San Francisco and New York show that MSMs who use crystal vs. non users are:
  - 2-3X more likely to have HIV
  - 6x more likely to have syphilis
  - 2X more likely to have gonorrhea

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# HIV Transmission

- Risk
- Endurance
- Pushing personal boundaries
- Desire
- Viral load

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# Meth users were more likely to:

- Self report as HIV positive
- Have multiple male partners (more than 10)
- Report having had unprotected anal sex - insertive and receptive
- Report using the Internet to find sexual partners
- Report using Viagra or Levitra

*\* Study in Broward and Miami-Dade counties*

*White et al. 2005, DOH, UM*

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# Factors Influencing Disclosure

- HIV- sex partner's disclosure
- Sexual venue (public vs private)
- Primary vs. non-primary partner
- Perceived risk of sex act
- Belief: HIV- individuals should initiate safer sex strategies

\* *Larkins et. al. (2005) AIDS Care, May; 17(4): 521-32*

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# Heterosexual Men in Northern California

- Sexually active with casual or anonymous female partner
- Have multiple female partners
- Anal sex with female partner
- Sex with IDU
- Received drugs or money for sex
- Forced into sex

*\*(2006) Methamphetamine use and HIV risk behaviors among heterosexual men; MMWR, 55(10) 3/17/2006,*

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# Meth & HIV + Gay Men

- Meth and Sex
  - Disinhibits sexual experimentation
  - Meth linked to prolonged, unsafe sexual activity

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# Meth & HIV + Gay Men

- Self Medication of Negative Affect Associated with HIV+ Serostatus
- Coping with HIV
- Temporary escape
- Relieves fatigue and malaise
- Coping with death
- Manage stigma and low self-esteem

*\*Semple, S. J. et al. (2002) Motivations associated with methamphetamine use among HIV+ men who have sex with men. Journal of Substance Abuse, 22, 149-156.*

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# HIV & HAART

- Drug Resistance
  - Tumor Necrosis Factor
  - Metabolic Rates
  - Medical Adherence
- Drug Interactions
  - CYP2D6

*Ghaziani, A. Crystal methamphetamine and antiretroviral drug resistance: IAPAC Monthly, Oct. 2005.*

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# Meth & HIV Pathogenesis

- Feline models
  - Increased mutations
  - Increased viral replication
- Enhanced neurotoxic effects
- Neuronal injury

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# Methamphetamine in South Florida: Survey and Focus Group Findings

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# Meth in South Florida

- 2004 Miami Club Drug Study
- 2006 South Beach Study
- 2003 Circuit Party Survey
- Focus groups

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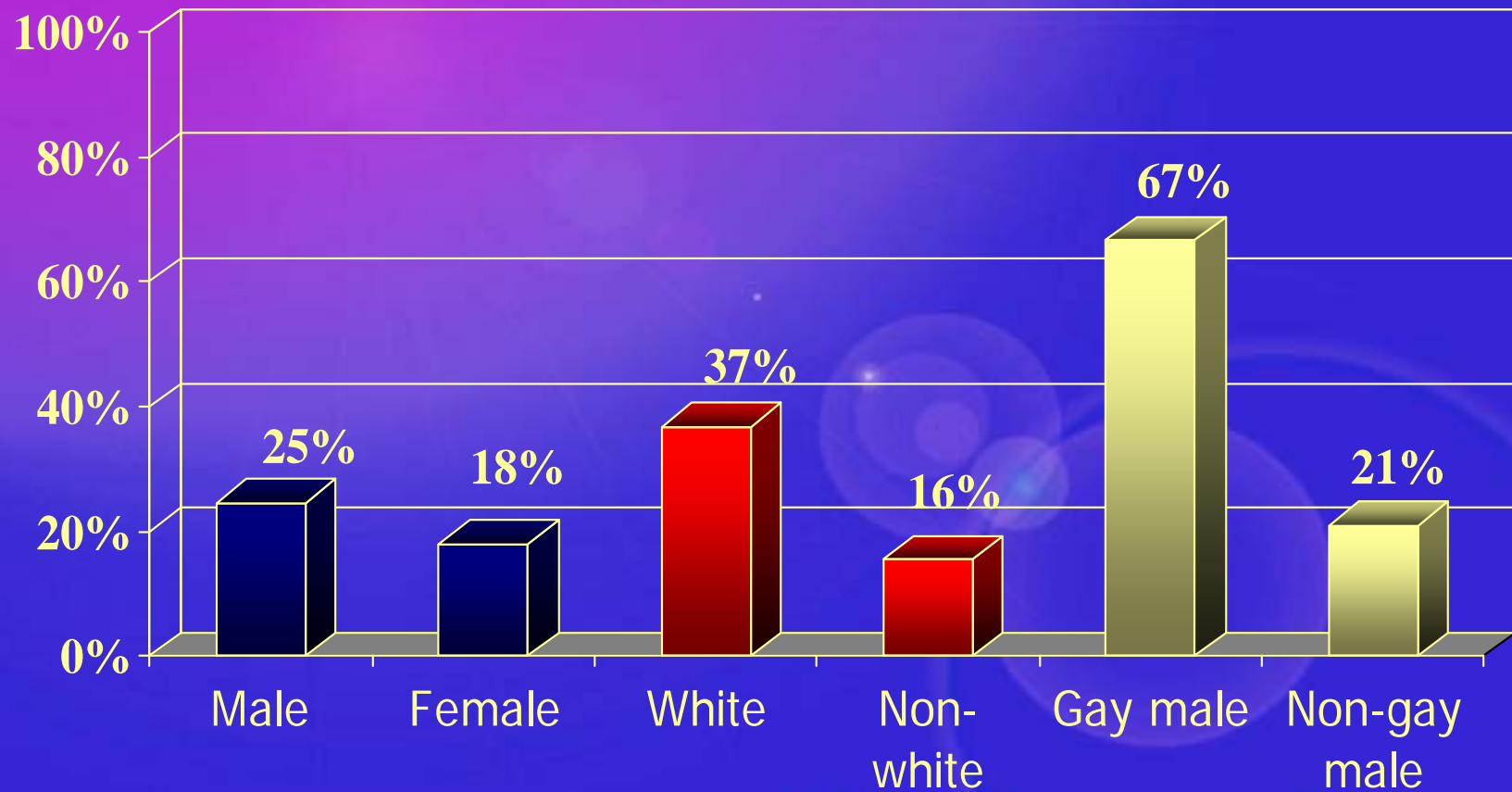
# 2004 Club Drug Study

Ecstasy users

median age = 23

N=186

% Ever used methamphetamine



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# 2004 Club Drug Study

	Ever used	Never used	
Age (yrs)	24.2	22.9	
Any drug treatment	51.2%	22.1%	
Ever arrested	61.0%	38.6%	

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# 2006 South Beach Study

street and prescription drug abusers

N=100

	Total	Ever Meth (n=42)	Meth Past 90 days (n=18)
Men	65	47.7%	20.0%
Women	35	31.4%	14.3%
Af. Am	14	28.6%	14.3%
Hispanic	35	54.2%	20.0%
Anglo	39	46.2%	20.5%
Other	2	50.0%	50.0%

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# 2006 South Beach Study

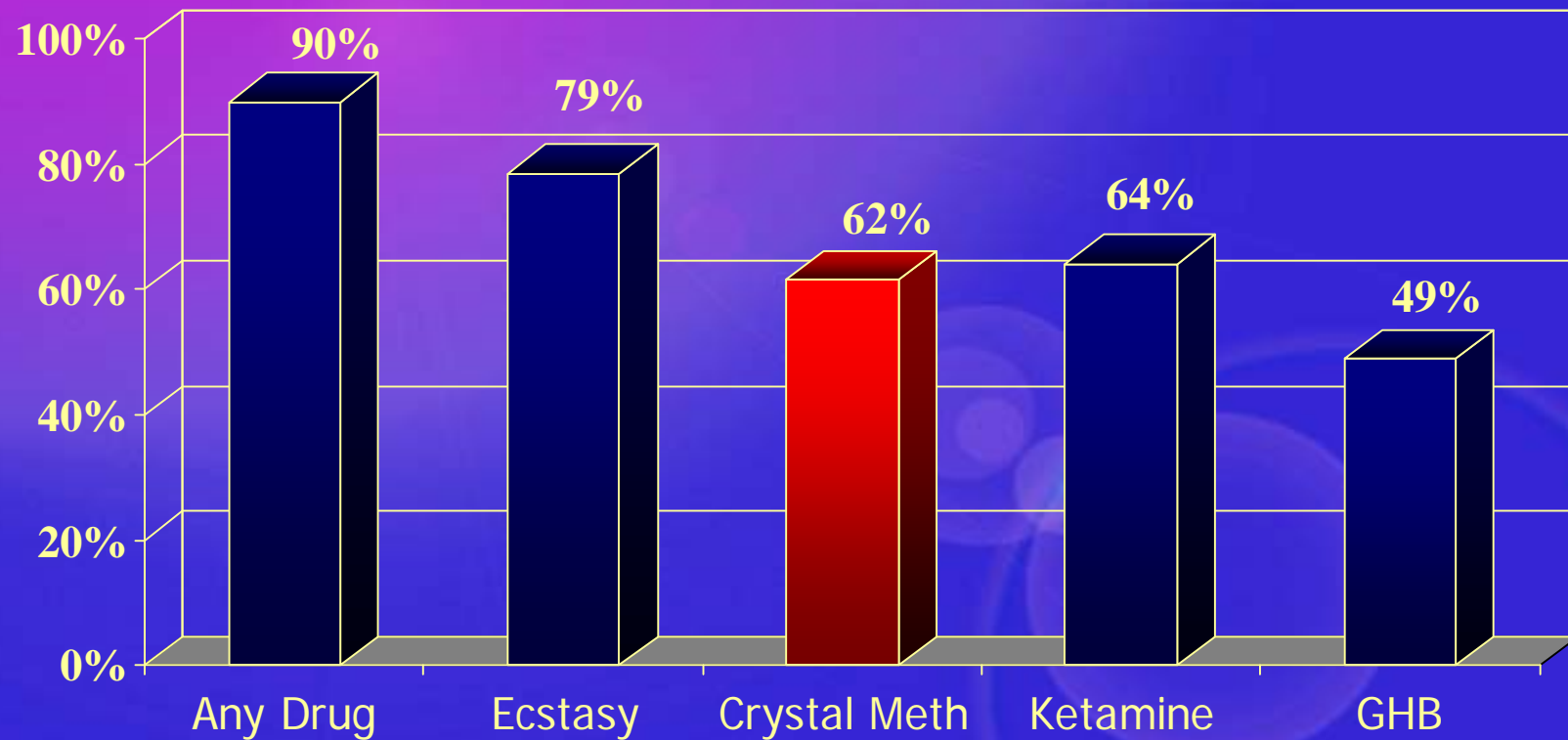
N=100

\*p<.05

	Ever Meth (n=42)	Meth Past 90 days (n=18)
Age (yrs)	32.6 (v 27.4) *	33.3 (v 28.8) *
Education (yrs)	13.7 (v 12.7) *	13.8 (v 13.0)
Ever homeless	17 (40.5%)	7 (38.9%)
Arrest history	34 (81%)	15 (83.3%)
Heterosexual		
Males	23 (74.2%)	7 (53.8%)
Females	9 (81.8%)	3 (60%)

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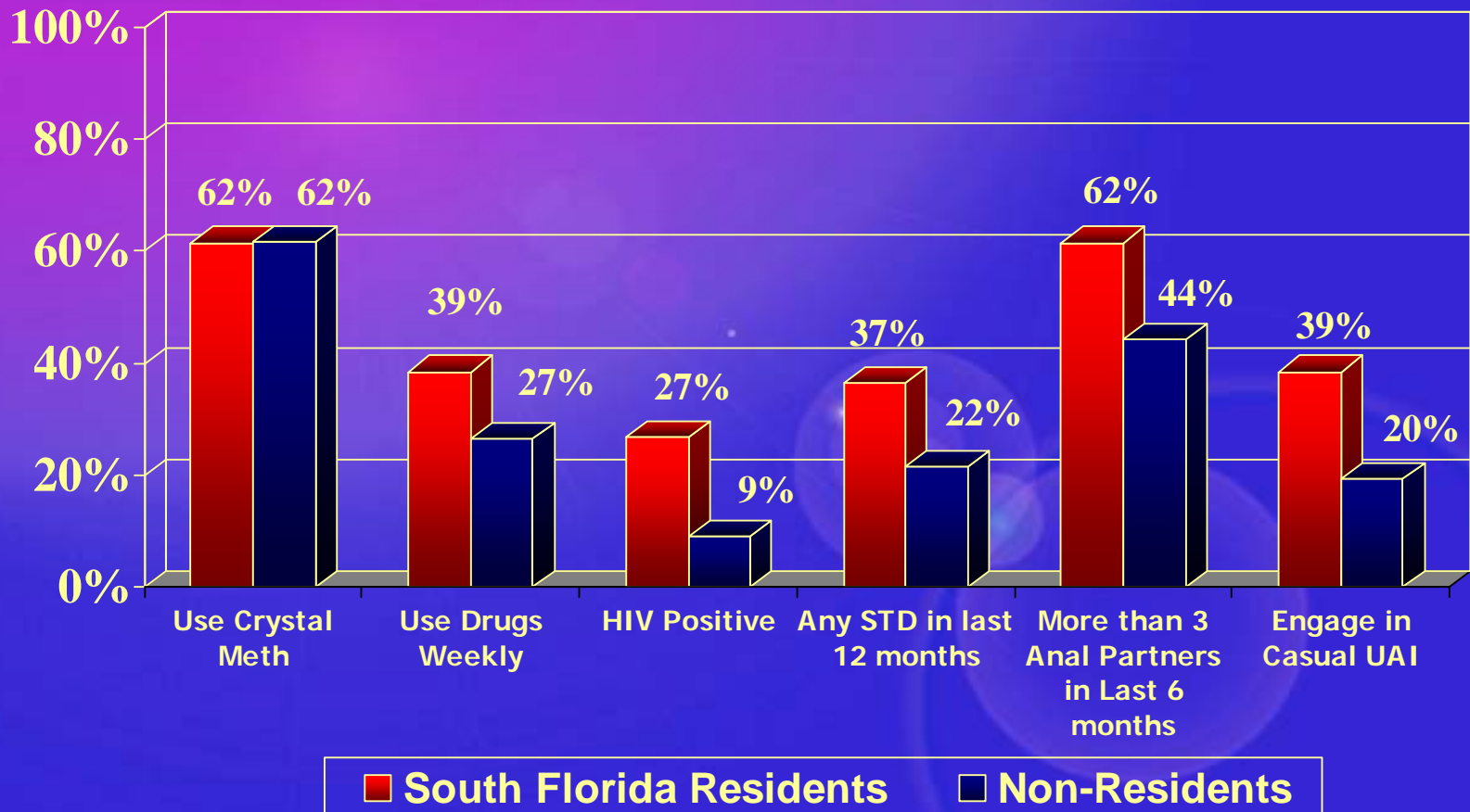
# 2003 Miami Circuit Party (N=237) Prior 6 Months Drug Use by Gay Men



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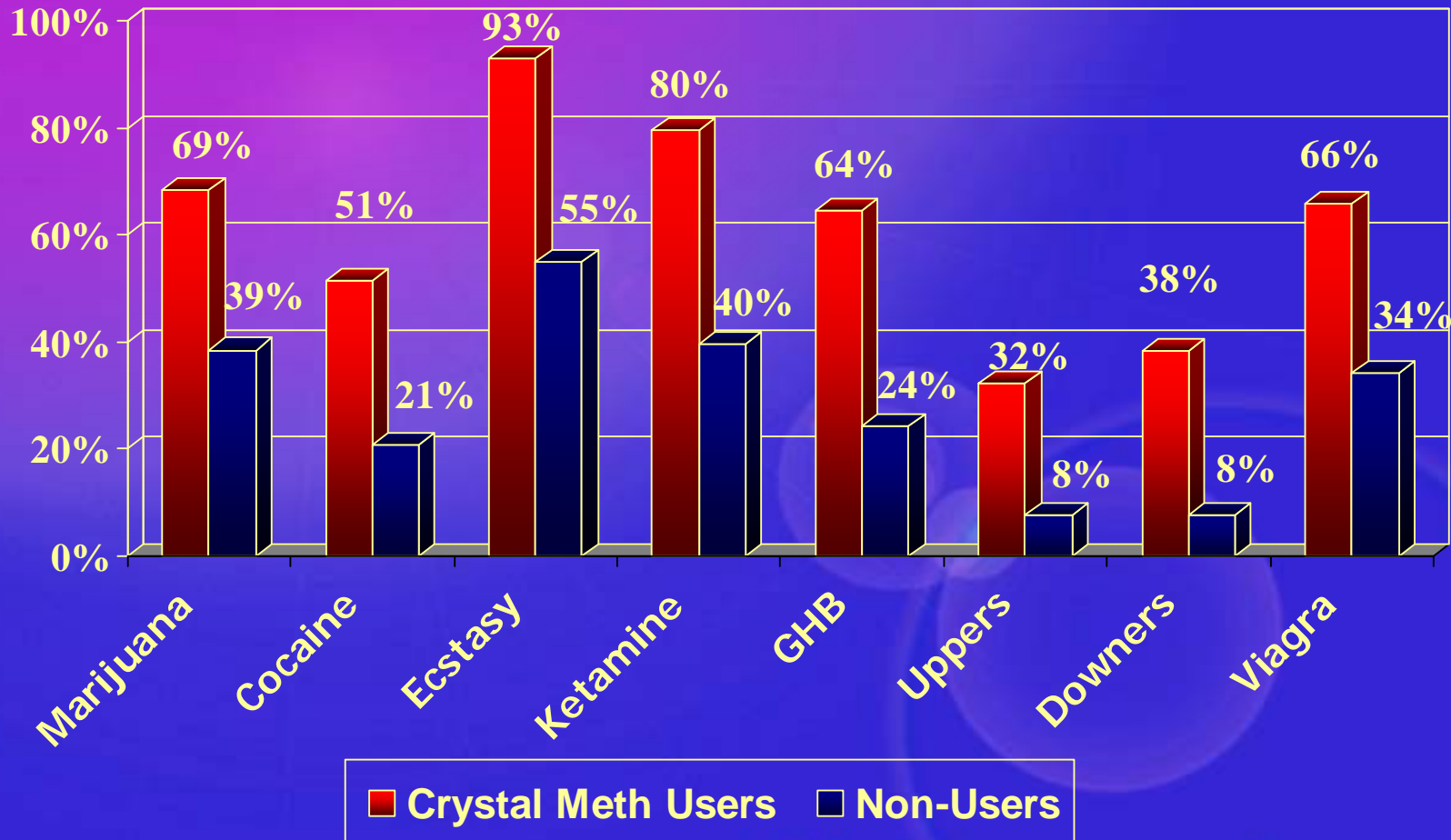
# Characteristics of Gay Men by Residence

## 2003 Miami Circuit Party (N=237)



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# Meth and Polydrug Use by Gay Men 2003 Miami Circuit Party (N=237)



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# Focus Groups

- Gay and bisexual men over 18 who
  - Had sex in the past 30 days
  - Used meth 5+ times in the past year
- Participants
  - 10 Hispanic, 8 Anglo, 1 other ethnicity
  - 11 current crystal meth users, 8 former users
  - 9 of 11 current users reported being HIV+
  - 6 of 8 ex-users reported being HIV+

*\* Health professionals' focus group*

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# Motivations for Using Crystal Meth

- Escaping loneliness
- Fears of aging/sexual unattractiveness
- Lowering sexual inhibitions

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# Escaping Loneliness

- “The sense of being so alone in the world just becomes so overwhelming to me, and drugs can kind of take that away.”

-50 year-old Anglo

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# Dealing with Aging

- “...when they get into their late thirties and early forties, that’s when they get into real trouble; ‘I’ve got to get everything I can get now before my hair falls out... I’ve just got to do it now before I’m no longer a commodity.’ And they just get annihilated.”

-HIV/AIDS practitioner remarking  
on his gay clients

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# Dealing with Illness

- “It was a way to sort of numb the pain, to deal with the body issues that come with [cancer].... It took a long time to get to the point where I felt sexually attractive again. Crystal did wonders towards making that happen.”

-38 year-old Anglo

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# Lowering Sexual Inhibitions

- “I mean, I could personally never go to a bathhouse if I wasn’t cracked out of my skull, you know? And so the drug allows me to do things I would never be able to do without it.”

- 33 year-old Hispanic

- All Participants had used crystal for sex
- All but 4 men had done so in group settings

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# Consequences of Using Meth

- Isolation and lost personal relationships
- Sexual risks, HIV and STI
- Return to reality

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# Isolation

- “People who get sucked into crystal use very quickly drop out of sight. You don’t see that they’ve plucked all the hair out of their eyebrows, the sores on their skin, the sunken in cheeks. You don’t see that really physically ugly side of it, because people who get like that have long since disappeared.”

-41 year-old Hispanic

- Regular use often becomes a social barrier
- Paranoia creates further isolation, even from sex scenes

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# Lost Personal Relationships

- “... I developed a personal relationship with one of these guys, and it had been the greatest relationship I had ever been in. My life began to tumble, his life was tumbling, and it all ended. It was like, ‘Well, I’m leaving,’ and he walked away from the scene. It took me another three or four months to figure out that I should do the same thing.”

-49 year-old Hispanic

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# Lost Personal Relationships

- Friendships with non-users suffer
- Sexual adventurism impairs long-term relationships
- Business / work relationships deteriorate

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# Sexual Risks and HIV/STI

- “There can be a bowl of condoms sitting right in the middle of the bed, and they’re not going to get used.”

• -38 year-old Anglo

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# Sexual Risks and HIV/STI

- Loss of inhibitions leads to sexual risks not taken when not on crystal meth
- Men on crystal meth are unlikely to use condoms or to inquire about partner's HIV status
- Many cited health problems including HIV/STI as a sign that crystal was taking control of their lives

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# Return to Reality

- “It just felt like a connection. In my case I needed what I thought was intimacy. For those twelve hours I thought I was in love. That’s why I know the lie.

- 34 year-old Hispanic

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# Return to Reality

- “Well, all the sex that I have now is with crystal....Now, I mean, it’s sort of like the sex has become, um, instead of drugs enhancing sex, the sex has become a way to enhance the drugs.”
  - 37 year-old Anglo
- The experience of sex on crystal meth becomes less fulfilling over time.

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# Dependence

- “It’s a terrible come-down. After you wake up from sleeping as long as you can, you feel like shit. But that for me lasts a day. And then afterwards I want it again, and I know if I keep doing this it will be the death of me.”

-35 year-old Hispanic

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# Dependence

- Exhaustion and other physical symptoms of “coming down”
- Depression and despair
- Use of sedatives and tranquilizers to alleviate the effects

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# Redefining Normal

- “...the first couple of times after you do crystal it manages to convince you that the state you are in when you are high on crystal is the normal, desirable, natural state, and what happens to you when you are off crystal is the abnormal condition that needs to be rectified.”

-38 year-old Anglo

- Challenge of normalizing life and sex without crystal

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# Conclusions

- Gay and bisexual men are the population in South Florida most at risk for crystal meth use.
- There is some evidence of increased use among heterosexuals who abuse other drugs.
- Loneliness, aging and illness drive crystal use among gay men, but this often results in further isolation.

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# Conclusions

- Crystal is often used in sexual situations among gay men, and is highly related to behaviors that risk HIV and other sexually transmitted disease infections.
- There is a need for HIV and drug interventions that target gay social norms and expectations.

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# Summary

- Meth is significant risk factor for HIV infection
- Affects sexual risk taking among all populations
- Probably enhances HAART resistance
- May increase viral load
- Drug Interactions
- HIV & meth synergy for neuropsych problems
- Used to cope with living with HIV.

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