Perceptions and Experiences of Substance Use Treatment among MSM Who Use Stimulants in the Northeastern U.S.


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Introduction

In 2018, about 1.9 million U.S. adolescents and adults reported methamphetamine use in the past year.

Use seems to be increasing across the country, with men who have sex with men (MSM) being more likely to engage in past year use of methamphetamine compared to other men. *

No pharmacological options have proven effective in treating methamphetamine use and evidence regarding behavioral therapies on use outcomes has shown modest effects.

Few researchers have explored the treatment perceptions and experiences of MSM who use methamphetamine in the U.S.

Aim

To explore the individual treatment needs of MSM who use stimulants in small cities in the northeastern U.S.

Methods

We conducted semi-structured interviews with MSM in New Haven, CT, and Providence, RI, who reported any stimulant use in the past 6 months. Interviews topics ranged from social networks to perceptions of and experiences with substance use and treatment. Participants completed a demographic and risk behavior survey and the ASSIST Lite. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis.

Results

22 participants were interviewed (16 in Providence, RI and 6 in New Haven, CT). Nearly half (45.5%) identified as gay and another 13.6% identified as bisexual.

Five major themes were identified related to treatment perceptions and experiences. Participants:

1. expressed a desire and demand for harm reduction approaches to treatment.

2. sometimes entered treatment via incarceration.

3. identified social networks as both a positive and a negative influence on treatment entry and experiences.

4. changed social settings for their recovery, and

5. expressed a desire and demand for harm reduction approaches to treatment.

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Grand Tour Question

What are the barriers to substance use service utilization among MSM who use crystal methamphetamine or other stimulants in small cities in the northeastern U.S.?*