Crystal Meth

In today’s society, the drug epidemic is lethal to not only the individuals who choose to exploit it, but also to the innocent individuals inadvertently caught in the middle of it. With the new trend of individuals choosing to get, “high” or experience a euphoric state of reality, the availability of illegal drugs is more prevalent than ever. With some drugs providing actual medicinal help, numerous amounts of individuals decide to abuse their availability. It is heartbreaking to encounter numerous individuals that we know or may not know experience the horrifying effects of drug usage. It shows that sometimes we as human beings over exercise our freedom to decipher drugs as healers or unhealthy temporary outlets. It also shows that by using drugs in such an unhealthy manner, we lose our chance of experiencing life to the fullest. Sometimes we as individuals desire to retain so many things, whether it be happiness, houses, or heaven, we start to depend on things like drugs to achieve artificial happiness and pleasure. That is how addiction occurs in numerous people who want to reach that “high” that even mere living doesn’t provide. We as individuals also inherently depend on the opinions of others when choosing different paths to take in life. We succumb to peer pressure, which may be healthy but can also lead one to the road of self-destruction. We desire so much to be the smartest and well off individuals that we commit stupid actions to achieve that status. Those stupid actions scar us for life and destroy the original destiny that God intended for us to achieve. Drug abuse diminishes the trust we have in ourselves and the trust that others have in us. Although in time it may literally kills us, it ultimately slowly kills us emotionally from the first thought of doing it. Though there are many drugs prevalent in the world that people utilize, there is one in particular that kills us individual even from the thought of doing it. That drug is crystal methamphetamine or "Ice" and it is not only a problem the world faces but also now an emerging problem the State of Hawaii has to deal with.

**PROBLEM:** Though once used as a type of anti-sleep agent for soldiers in World War II [[1]](#footnote-1), it has recently become a high-risk habit forming drug that alters the physical and emotional being of the individual. Crystal meth has developed from a heedless drug into a harmful habit forming drug. The problem is that meth is the most addictive man made drug as it releases three times the amount of dopamine than crack cocaine [[2]](#footnote-2). As that amount of dopamine flows through the brain, the dopamine receptors begin to diminish, as there is an overload of dopamine. This incredible amount of dopamine leaves users with an intense rush of pleasure with the high lasting about 10 hours[[3]](#footnote-3). As stated in the video on the Hawaii Meth Project website, presented by UCLA Integrated Substance Abuse Programs, “no matter how much meth we use, we will never experience that first high.” Meth users will never experience their first high because of the irreversible damage that meth does to the brain. The damage causes dopamine receptors to shut down, destroys dopamine transporters, and lessens the amount of dopamine created in the brain[[4]](#footnote-4). With the increase usage of meth by an addict, can cause changes in their brain chemistry. The amount of pleasure that meth releases it destroys the wiring in the pleasure centers, making it virtually impossible sometimes for meth users to experience pleasure[[5]](#footnote-5). One of the most notable effects of meth is the change in the physical aspect of meth users. Meth causes the blood vessels to contract and cuts off the constant flow of blood to all parts of the body. This is caused by heavy usage and ultimately destroys these vessels, causing tissues to become at risk to damage, also interfering with the body's ability to repair it. Meth users sometimes could be covered in sores from the cause of formication, a sensation that makes the body feels like insects are crawling beneath the skin[[6]](#footnote-6). Meth also causes weight loss as there is decrease in appetite, which makes meth attractive to people. It also causes bad hygiene, poor diet, and occasional tooth grinding which leads to “meth mouth”. “Meth mouth” consists of broken, stained, and rotting of the teeth from the side effects stated in the last sentence. The corrosive chemicals that are in meth such as also cause it: anhydrous ammonia (found in fertilizers), red phosphorus (found on matchboxes) and lithium (found in batteries), which when smoked or snorted might erode the tooth's protective enamel coating[[7]](#footnote-7). The problem with meth is that it is very lethal and destroys our bodies with just one hit. The causes of meth also relates to the problems of meth and the chemicals inside that will kill us.

**CAUSE:** Methamphetamine is created using chemicals that are readily available to manufacturers who seek to create this type of drug. According to Crystal Meth Addiction Organization the,

"Primary precursor chemicals commonly used for manufacturing Crystal Meth include: ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, hydrochloric or hydriotic acid, ether, and red phosphorus, which were readily available from numerous sources" (Crystal Meth Addiction). [[8]](#footnote-8)

Due to the lenient rules of manufacturing for the chemicals needed in meth, people found it easy to mass-produce this highly risky drug. Some states have passed a law that requires that all pseudoephedrine products be moved behind the counter in pharmacies and stores. Although these political efforts have been slow, these strategies have increased the strain of difficulty for meth producers to acquire large quantities of pseudoephedrine without attracting the attention of retailers and inevitably law enforcement. The rise of crystal meth production in Mexico has had an unforeseen result. Mexican drug cartels with familiar routes, smuggling strategies, and highly trained personnel for delivering marijuana and heroin into America added crystal meth to their list of drugs. This introduced crystal meth into mountain and the Midwest regions of America. The elongations of crystal meth vending in these areas have impacted the rising and spreading rates of meth-related drug disorders in America. Though the use of Methamphetamine was centralized in parts of California during the 1980's, it's dramatic increase of usage as a smoke able drug in Hawaii occurred during the late 80's. [[9]](#footnote-9)

**HAWAII: "**In the mid-1980s Crystal Meth use rocketed dramatically in Honolulu as "ice", a smoke able form of the drug that was imported onto the island of Oahu from the Philippines" [[10]](#footnote-10) Since the drug has been introduced from Asia in the mid-1980s, ice has gone into every community in Hawaii, becoming widely used and easily available. Every level of government in Hawaii is focused on stopping the drug. Hawaii lawmakers took the rare step of creating a joint House-Senate committee to devise an attack plan on this epidemic. Special police units are being made, and communities are holding meetings and anti-drug rallies. Most of the ice in Hawaii is produced in Mexico and California, according to federal authorities. Hawaii prefers the imported; smoke able crystal meth or "ice," which is higher in purity. Though practically every state has a meth problem, Hawaii has been known of having the worst problem anywhere. According to CBS News, “Some 37.4 percent of men jailed in Honolulu tested positive for methamphetamine in 2001, higher than any other major U.S. city, the federal government says.”(Bootie Cosgrove-Mather

)[[11]](#footnote-11) This article alludes that Hawaii has a significantly higher meth problem than any other state in the country. This problem caught the eye of Charles L. Goodwin, special agent in charge, gave a congressional testimony before the House Government Reform Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy, and Human Resources. Goodwin states,

“The wide-spread use of crystal methamphetamine has also deeply hurt the economy and social image of Hawaii. Several studies… spend close to half a billion dollars per year on corrections, education, counseling, and other related programs relative to the crystal methamphetamine problem. News reports have noted that there are as many as 30,000 crystal methamphetamine users in Hawaii who spend between $540 million to 1.8 billion annually based on a $50 to $170 per day habit. In addition, the crystal methamphetamine also has a negative impact on the natural environment in Hawaii. Many researchers believe that the manufacturing and usage of crystal methamphetamine may be having a detrimental impact on the environment.” [[12]](#footnote-12)(Charles L. Goodwin Special Agent In Charge - Honolulu Division)

In his statement to congress, Goodwin stated clearly the effects of crystal meth use in Hawaii. It does not help further more that Hawaii has one of the highest crystal meth uses in the country. This statement makes even more of an impact because it does hurt our economy a lot because of what it has done. Hawaii is centered on unconditional family love and it is severed because of crystal meth. Tourists come to Hawaii for the beaches and the natural beauty all over the islands; they do not come just to smoke meth. Hawaii has its problem and there are solutions out there that can decrease this problem throughout the islands.

**SOLUTION:** Although meth usage has dramatically increased in the past decade, the government is finding solutions to aid this problem. You'll find that in each state, controlled substances laws are required in order to keep the drug usage on the minimum. But when dealing with methamphetamine, the government is more worried about the regulation of the precursor ingredients than the actual drug itself.

"Since the federal Combat Methamphetamine Epidemic Act of 2005 ("CMEA") was passed in 2005, 41 states have passed laws regulating the sale of the crystal meth precursor pseudoephedrine" (Kirk Buchnan, LA police department).

These specific acts like the CMEA further limit the usage and the precursor ingredients in meth that allow the drug to be made.

"Federal and state regulations, as well as voluntary actions by many of the manufacturers of pseudoephedrine-containing medications, led to packaging modifications, giving rise to blister packaging of all products with pseudoephedrine, which are now sold in limited numbers"[[13]](#footnote-13)

The federal and state regulations cut down on the amount of pseudoephedrine that is produced in America in order to cut down on the amount of meth that is being made. As the amount of pseudoephedrine lowers, meth will become ultimately scarce. Without ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, meth is nothing; it is like making a cake without any flour; which makes pseudoephedrine extremely potent.

In conclusion, the crystal meth epidemic is lethal not only to Hawaii, but around the world as well. This drug is accessible by anyone and also can be made with everyday household cleaning chemicals. This drug has caused a lot of turmoil for anyone who has done it once. It makes the person who is hooked on it a completely different person, physically and emotionally. Though there are many solutions out there, the rate of meth use is still high in the United States.

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