Psychoisis in methamphetamine abusers - 3 years experience in Kowloon East Substance Abuse Clinic

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Introduction
For the past 3 years, clinical observation in the Substance Abuse Clinic of Kowloon East Cluster (KESAC) revealed an increasing trend of methamphetamine (known as ‘ice’) abusers seeking for psychiatric treatment. Very often, a clinical presentation of psychosis in the context of substance abuse was the main motivation of treatment. This group of clients carries complex clinical needs and risks requiring a coordinated care plan.

Objectives
1) To report the spectrum of psychotic illness and treatment patterns of methamphetamine abusers, and 2) To describe different treatment strategies to address clients’ needs and improve the treatment concordance

Methodology
Patients who were seen as new cases in KESAC between January 2012 and December 2014 were recruited. Data in the age, gender, primary drug of abuse (DOA), principal psychiatric diagnosis, attendance rate, medication and multidisciplinary input were collected. Individual case records were further reviewed for the updated psychiatric condition. All cases were discussed in a multidisciplinary team meeting involving psychiatrist, occupational therapist, designated social workers, clinical psychologist and nurses. This is followed by need-based treatments which include medication and psychosocial treatment, counselling and in some cases, psychotherapy. The main outcome measures were the spectrum of psychotic illness and treatment patterns.

Result
A total of 293 patients received the intake assessment. The mean age of the patients was 32 years (range 16 to 58). More than 60% of them are male. Among the cases, 85 (v.s. 30 cases during another 3-year period from 2009 to 2011) were identified with methamphetamine as their primary DOA. A current psychiatric diagnosis of psychotic disorder was formulated in 75% of methamphetamine abusers (64 out of 85 cases), of which 45% (39 cases) were diagnosed substance-induced psychotic disorder (F1X.5) and 24% (20 cases) presented with dual diagnosis (F20-29) according to ICD-10 classification. Besides, 14% (12 cases) were also documented to present with an intoxicated state right upon our medical attention, while 6% (5 cases) were diagnosed with affective psychosis (bipolar affective disorder / psychotic depression) as their principal psychiatric diagnosis. Treatment concordance is important to the success of substance abuse treatment. Among the methamphetamine abusers with psychosis, 80% (51 cases) of them maintained regular treatment and follow-up at our clinic for ongoing monitoring. Apart from the existing service, different treatment strategies were also adopted to enhance their motivation to sustain for treatment. Initiatives include person-centered vocational, mindfulness and positive emotion group programs by occupational therapists and individual comprehensive neurocognitive assessments for clients presented with cognitive problems by clinical psychologist. The service will undergo regular review for enhancing partnership with other health care providers.