

The **PREVENTION** **CONNECTION** NEWSLETTER

Is Speed Still a Factor in Montana?

By Dave Peshek, Administrator, Montana Chemical Dependency Center

No, we're not talking about how fast our vehicles are driving on our roadways. We're talking about another illegal activity that ruins the lives of Montanans in a very different, but nonetheless deadly, fashion. We're talking about speed in another form—methamphetamine.

Evidence would suggest that there has not been any significant slowing down of speed—it continues to be widely manufactured and used, rapidly addictive and devastatingly destructive. The costs associated with methamphetamine treatment, coupled with meth lab cleanup, additional need for law enforcement, broken families, unemployment, and the more frequent and costly health issues common to addicts and their children add up to a monumental impact on Montana's citizens.

Over the past five years, treatment data from the Montana Chemical Dependency Center (MCDC) indicates that the percentage of the population receiving inpatient treatment at this facility has remained rela-

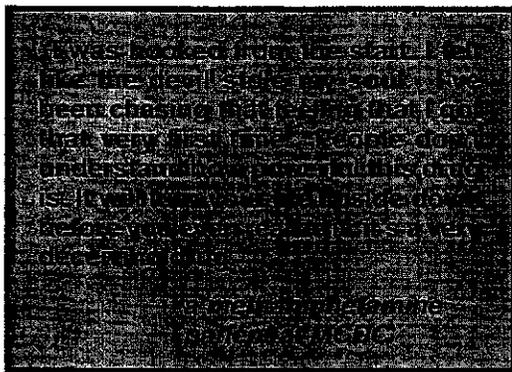
tively stable—approximately one-third of the patients treated in a given year are meth addicts. That is one-third of a total of approximately 800-900 patients. There tends to be a slightly higher percentage of female meth addicts than male addicts in treatment. The preferred route of use for both men and women is injection or IV use. This method also carries with it an increased likelihood of being infected with HIV or Hepatitis C. These infections are often coupled with other physical and psychological problems that manifest from use.

Given the necessity of significant lifestyle changes associated with recovery from any substance, the life-style changes required to maintain recovery from a highly addictive substance such as methamphetamine are truly monumental.

Multiple relapses begin to take a powerful toll on the individual, a fact that becomes increasingly obvious if the individual enters treatment multiple times. We often see the ravages of this drug on the brain as evidenced by the emergence and progression of psychiatric disorders coupled with progressive physiological complications.

Treatment becomes more complex, more expensive, takes longer and requires a wider mix of professional staff to deal with multiple issues in addition to the addiction.

To quote another patient at Montana Chemical Dependency Center: "Someone else doesn't have to ruin their whole life over this (meth); I've already done it for them." This statement, unfortunately, will not likely keep anyone from trying this highly addictive and devastating substance—but it should!



Methamphetamine in Montana

A Conversation with Mary Haydal	4-5
Dr. Prakash Shet, MD, MSH	6
Profile of a Hero	7
Comprehensive Anti-Meth	8, 12-13
Meth Labs & Rats	9-10
Slang for Meth	12
Drug Endangered Children	15
DBT Therapy	17
Mother's & Children's Recovery Homes	18-21
Meth in Rural Montana	23

Montana State Legislature

2

Exhibit No. _____

Title _____
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