

Abstract

Background: Methamphetamine was first synthesized in 1893 by Japanese chemist Nagai Nagayoshi. In 1919, another Japanese chemist for the first time synthesized methamphetamine in crystalline form. The compound was used as a remedy for asthma, fever, runny nose and pain. It was also used in psychiatry for the treatment of schizophrenia and addiction to alcohol or morphine. Methamphetamine was researched for its use in World War II, where it soon gained great popularity. Soldiers of Germany, Japan and the Allies abused it extensively in combat missions. After the end of the war, a methamphetamine crisis broke out in Japan due to the opening of methamphetamine warehouses. This crisis lasted until the end of the 1950s.

Aims: The present research has two goals: to map different areas of use and abuse of methamphetamine from its discovery to the late 1950s (I) and to describe the history of methamphetamine, its use in the World War II and the subsequent methamphetamine epidemic in Japan (II).

Methods: The thesis will be written using a content analysis of primary and secondary documents, which will be searched using databases made available to students of the Charles University. A universe will be defined. It will cover 3 categories: the history of methamphetamine, World War II and post-war Japan. In each category, keywords will be determined according to which relevant documents will be searched. These will then be sorted into primary categories, as well as by year of creation and focus. Subsequently, the content analysis itself and the creation of the text of the work will be carried out.

Results and conclusion: Methamphetamine, along with amphetamine, was invented as a stronger substitute for ephedrine and epinephrine. It was used in medicine, but also abused to induce euphoria, excess energy and reduce the feeling of hunger. During World War II, it was massively abused by soldiers of Germany and Japan, who were therefore able to stay awake for longer time and could better focus in missions. After the end of the war, a methamphetamine epidemic broke out in Japan, resulting in a change of legislation and the campaign against drugs. This crisis passed in 1957 when the number of addicts began to decrease.

Keywords: discovery of methamphetamine – ephedrine, use of methamphetamine, Nagai Nagayoshi, Akira Ogata, Lazăr Edelenau, World War II – Wehrmacht, Pervitin, Otto Ranke, kamikaze, Temmler Werke, post-war Japan – Philopon, Yakuza, shabu