

Abstract

Background: Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) increases the risk of substance abuse. Within the ADHD self-medication theory, people with ADHD choose stimulants to compensate for unpleasant conditions and relieve and suppress ADHD symptoms such as excessive hyperactivity, inattention, and emotional lability.

Objectives: The aim of the research was to describe the context of the use of methamphetamine in the user career of persons diagnosed with ADHD, focusing on the reasons for using methamphetamine and the benefits of this group within the framework of the self-medication theory of the use of addictive substances aimed at the prevention, and treatment of addiction disorders.

Methods: The research was conducted qualitatively through semi-structured interviews. Open-ended interviews, axial coding and pattern capture were used to analyze the data. The sample consisted of 6 individuals purposively selected from the Clinic of Addiction Medicine in Prague.

Results: The results show that methamphetamine was often used for reasons that help the user to function normally, increase productivity and concentration, higher self-esteem, and suppress negative emotions. Positive changes in the intensity of ADHD symptoms were noted over time and especially after methamphetamine use. Changes for the better after use were seen in the areas of concentration, focus, feelings of restlessness, and the need to move. Intentional methamphetamine use as part of ADHD self-medication was evident in one case. At the same time other respondents reported other self-medication tendencies, namely, in the context of alleviating depressive and anxiety states, attenuating negative emotions, and as a result of trauma experienced. Methamphetamine was used to alleviate excessive hyperactivity and restlessness.

Conclusion: Findings from this research may help identify reasons for methamphetamine use by persons with ADHD, as well as in better targeting early diagnosis of ADHD and prevention of potential methamphetamine self-medication patterns in this at-risk group.

Keywords: ADHD, methamphetamine, self-medication theory

