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Narcotics Anonymous Members in Recovery from Methamphetamine Use Disorder

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: Methamphetamine use disorder (MUD) is a major public health problem, but there are no evidence-based, best-practice, pharmacologic, or behavioral treatments for it. Narcotics Anonymous (NA) may provide an option for referral for such patients.

Methods: Two waves of surveys were sent to a sample of NA members to evaluate demographic, drug use, and NA-related issues. Of 4445 responses received from US residents, 647 listed themselves as abstinent from their worst drug problem, methamphetamine. Twelve possible sources of support were scored by these latter respondents for how important each was for their own recovery.

Results: Methamphetamine respondents were longstanding NA members, with their first NA meeting 30.2 years ago, 84.3% having served as sponsors for other members, and with little current craving (0.65 out of 10). Although now abstinent for an average of 13.4 years, at some point over the course of the membership, 47.4% had experienced a relapse, for an average of 16.7 months. In a factor analysis of resources scored, 29.6% of the variance fell under NA social and 29.2% spiritual; and 11.8% under outside professional support.

Discussion and Conclusions: NA served as a resource for supporting abstinence for some members with MUD. They scored social resources of NA support higher than both spiritual and outside institutional ones.

Scientific Significance: NA can serve as a community-based resource for MUD. Determining the nature of recovery that members with MUD have in NA can be useful for further research of socially grounded support for recovery in substance use disorders.