

GLOBAL METH USE EXCEEDS COCAINE AND HEROIN USE COMBINED

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) head Karen Tandy reported that there are more people using methamphetamine worldwide than users of heroin and cocaine combined. Tandy, speaking at the 24th International Drug Enforcement Conference in Montreal, described meth use and trafficking as a growing "global threat."

"More than 26 million people worldwide use amphetamines--largely methamphetamines," she said.

Some experts said that growing meth use could lead to a worldwide increase in related crime. "We know that many of the people that are arrested in Los Angeles--about 40 percent of them--have been using methamphetamine," said California-based neuroscientist Paul Thompson. "We're worried that as this drug is spreading throughout the U.S. and overseas, this could produce a massive increase in violent crime."

* Source: [Join Together](#), May 11, 2006

EAST COAST HIT BY RASH OF HEROIN DEATHS, OVERDOSES

Heroin users from Chicago to Maryland have been killed or sent to the hospital by a powerful drug mix that includes the painkiller fentanyl, [USA Today](#) reported on May 5th.

More than two dozen deaths and 300 hospitalizations have been tied to use of the mixture during the past three weeks, according to state and federal officials. The heroin-fentanyl mix first appeared in Chicago on April 13, and has killed 11 people there and caused overdoses in 144 other users. Since then, the drug has surfaced in Camden, NJ; Wilmington, DE; Salisbury, MD; Harrisburg, PA; and a handful of other communities.

Experts say the heroin-fentanyl mix is unusual because the painkiller is expensive, whereas heroin is usually cut with cheap substances like sugar or flour to boost dealer profits. Typically, it is midlevel dealers in the U.S. who cut the drugs.

One explanation for the heroin-fentanyl mix could be that dealers wanted to create a powerful batch of drugs to attract customers--a smart move, considering that when officials began warning addicts about the risk of overdoses associated with the mix, demand actually went up, not down.

*Source: [Join Together](#), May 5, 2006

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METH CRACKDOWN MAY HAVE TRIGGERED RISE IN ADDICTION

Laws that succeeded in curbing homegrown methamphetamine labs also opened the door to imports of highly pure "ice," in turn triggering a rise in meth addiction and treatment admissions, researchers say.

[MedPage Today](#) reported May 24 that researchers at the American Psychiatric Association meeting in Toronto said treatment admissions for meth have risen from 28,000 in 1993 to 150,000 in 2004. Current data indicates, however, that meth use has remained fairly constant, with lifetime use at about 5.1 percent of the population and past-month use at 0.3 percent.

National Institute on Drug Abuse researcher James Colliver, Ph.D., said that more addicts are smoking the purer "ice" version of meth rather than injecting or inhaling diluted powder forms of the drug: 80,000 of the 150,000 people admitted to treatment for meth addiction in 2003 said they smoked the drug.

"Smoking is a route that delivers the drug to the brain very rapidly producing greater reinforcement effects, and therefore higher rates of dependence." Colliver said. "The purer form of the drug also is more likely to cause brain damage."