



Meth availability sparks call for early identification and treatment

Addiction Practitioners' Association Aotearoa New Zealand (*dapaanz*)

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Reports of easier access to methamphetamine in some New Zealand communities are alarming, says the Addiction Practitioners' Association Aotearoa New Zealand (*dapaanz*) – and it is time to increase early identification and treatment for users.

“We’re not surprised that places like Whanganui are reporting 25 percent increases in the number of people diagnosed with an amphetamine-related disorder,” said *dapaanz* Executive Director Sue Paton.

“Many of our practitioners are reporting that methamphetamine has increasingly become a very accessible drug of choice in the communities in which they work.”

In a 3 August 2016 media release Whanganui District Health Board warned about the dangers of methamphetamine use, which include a wide range of psychological, physical and social symptoms. The release said methamphetamine is becoming easier to access through social media, encrypted websites and international networks.

Ms Paton says that while the Government should be commended for its collaborative interagency action plan *Tackling Methamphetamine*, its 2015 *Tackling Methamphetamine* progress report also confirms that many are finding the drug easier to get and far fewer are saying it is hard to get.

“Methamphetamine is a very destructive and highly addictive substance and its costs to society in terms of sickness, psychological damage, lost work hours and treatment are potentially enormous.

“It can have a devastating effect on people and their families/whānau, and that’s why having quick access to professional treatment available is so important.”

However, Ms Paton said *dapaanz* would like to see a much greater focus on early interventions where people with a potential methamphetamine problem could be identified before their situation escalates.

“We need to respond to this increased accessibility by making it easier for people to get help early and we think locations like doctor’s surgeries or wherever people present for help would be ideal places for screening for methamphetamine problems.

“Treatment works to transform lives and to prevent good people from descending into addiction. And the earlier people get treatment the better. It’s an investment that makes good social sense when you do the sums.”

For more information:

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