

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health
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THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A LOCAL SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM FOR FATAL AND NON-FATAL IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH CRYSTAL METHAMPHETAMINE USE

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Health receive Report No. 46-21 re: “The Implementation of a Local Surveillance System for Fatal and Non-Fatal Impacts Associated with Crystal Methamphetamine Use” for information.

Key Points

- Partners have suggested that crystal methamphetamine use is increasing in Middlesex-London, with increasing impacts in the community. The Population Health Assessment and Surveillance Team has developed a [local methamphetamine surveillance dashboard](#) to quantify these impacts.
- The finalized dashboard has five pages, corresponding to five categories of indicators plus a sixth page that includes technical notes. The dashboard is available on MLHU’s website.
- This data confirms that crystal methamphetamine is a present and emerging issue in the region.
- The dashboard will be used to track and surveil the impacts of crystal methamphetamine use and will play an important role in identifying and prioritizing potential areas for intervention. Data to date highlights the importance of upstream interventions that address social determinants of health.

Background

Community and stakeholder reports have suggested that crystal methamphetamine use appears to be increasing in Middlesex-London and impacting the community to a greater degree than other regions in Ontario. The Middlesex-London Health Unit’s (MLHU) Population Health Assessment and Surveillance Team (PHAST) submitted a proposal which was accepted for funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada’s (PHAC) Substance-related Harms Division to develop and implement a local methamphetamine surveillance system to quantify the impacts of crystal methamphetamine use in Middlesex-London. This initiative fills a gap in surveillance data needed to support a fulsome and coordinated community response to address methamphetamine use. It does so by providing data that, when combined with other indicators, can identify and prioritize community issues that can be addressed by public health action.

Two summary reports have been submitted to PHAC. The first detailed the project plan, community partners and consultation plan, results of both an environmental and literature scan, and a list of candidate indicators. The second report included details about community consultations, a list of finalized indicators, and a PDF of the surveillance dashboard. [Appendix A](#) includes the second report submitted to PHAC. Additionally, a presentation was given to PHAC detailing the development and dissemination of the methamphetamine surveillance dashboard, including lessons learned.

Community Consultations

An important step in developing the methamphetamine surveillance system was obtaining input from local community partner organizations. Community partner organizations who were consulted provided valuable feedback, suggestions for additional indicators to include, and potential data sources for the indicators of interest. Furthermore, connections between MLHU and these community organizations were established to support ongoing collaboration. Overall, consultations with community partners were a critical part of the creation of the methamphetamine surveillance system, and its development would not have been possible without their contributions, both in data and feedback.

Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the project team was not able to engage with individuals who use methamphetamine. In the future, the project team will engage with community members who use methamphetamine to better understand the harms associated with methamphetamine use and to assess how the surveillance of crystal methamphetamine morbidity data could be meaningfully actioned.

Surveillance Dashboard

The finalized [methamphetamine surveillance dashboard](#) has five pages, corresponding to five categories of indicators (harm reduction service utilization, healthcare utilization, treatment service utilization, outcomes and fatalities, and criminality related to methamphetamine), plus a sixth page that includes technical notes. Data are presented as counts by month or year, percentages, or rates per 100,000. Each page includes details about the data sources, including a brief description of the data. Additional data notes or definitions, important for data interpretation, can be found on the technical notes page. The data included are updated at varying intervals (monthly, quarterly, or annually), based on when data are available. The methamphetamine dashboard is located on MLHU's website as a part of the Community Health Status Resource.

Key Data Findings

[Appendix B](#) provides some of the key findings from the data included on the dashboard. Additional data findings are found on the [methamphetamine surveillance dashboard](#).

Next Steps

The methamphetamine surveillance dashboard is available on the MLHU website and will be routinely updated. The dashboard will be used to track and surveil the impacts of crystal methamphetamine use and will play an important role in identifying and prioritizing potential areas for intervention. When interpreted in the context of other markers of substance use in Middlesex-London, this data highlights the importance of upstream interventions that address the underlying social determinants of health.

Consultations directly with people who use crystal methamphetamine will inform next steps.

This report was prepared by the Population Health Assessment and Surveillance Team (PHAST) and the Healthy Communities and Injury Prevention Team.



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