METH INDUCED PSYCHOSOCIAL DISASTERS: FROM OPIATES TO METHAMPHETAMINES IN IRAN

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Opiates were the main drug of abuse in Iran drug scene since at least five centuries, although a new trend of methamphetamine (MA) use have been emerged during recent years. False beliefs (such as non-addictive nature and weight loss) and short term effects (increase of sexual pleasure and improving concentration and overall stamina) as well as other factors such as young population of the country, ease of consumption, and later on, local production and availability of MA in the country were influential on increasing trend towards this type of substances. Iran has implemented a large scale opioid maintenance treatment (OMT) program in response to HIV epidemics among people who inject opioids since 2002. The MA epidemic was superimposed on such a context and elicits considerable public health concerns among policy makers. From one hand MA use is associated with increased psychosocial instability and HIV related high risk behavior; on the other hand it could compromise positive outcomes of OMT programs. In this presentation, the existing data on extend of methamphetamine use and its psychosocial consequences in Iran would be reviewed and the policy implications would be discussed.