



**Royal  
Pharmaceutical  
Society  
of Great Britain**

## **Law and Ethics Bulletin**

### **Methamphetamine – link to cold remedies and reclassification**

Methamphetamine is a highly addictive, powerful stimulant that has potentially harmful effects on the central nervous system. The drug is produced in powder; tablet or crystal form and can be snorted, smoked, swallowed or injected. Typically users experience a brief rush followed by a longer period of euphoria which lasts for a number of days.

Methamphetamine is one of the easier synthetic drugs to make, and can be produced in a few hours using everyday equipment and commonly available ingredients, including over-the-counter cold remedies. The manufacturing of methamphetamine presents a substantial risk of injury and even death from contamination, toxic gases, fire or explosion.

Use of this drug (whose street names include crystal meth, crystal, ice, burn, pure, p, crank, yaba and meth) is already extensive in North America, Australia and South East Asia. From 18 January 2007, methamphetamine has been reclassified as a Class A drug in the UK. This reflects the true harms of the drug when misused, and concerns that it is gaining a foothold in the UK drugs market which could cause serious social problems.

Methamphetamine can be synthesised relatively easily from over-the-counter products containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine. In other countries, bulk sales of certain cold remedies are closely monitored because of this risk.

Pharmacists in the UK are therefore asked to be alert to unusual requests for any items or products containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine. In particular, requests for inappropriately large quantities of such products should be treated with caution.

Pharmacists may only supply methamphetamine to a patient on the authority of a prescription issued by an appropriate practitioner, although it is recognised that pharmacists will rarely be presented with such an authorisation. However, should any pharmacists receive such a prescription they should be aware that methamphetamine remains a Schedule 2 Controlled Drug. The product may be manufactured by a licence holder, practitioner, pharmacist or a person lawfully conducting a retail pharmacy

business who is acting in their capacity as such. Requirements as to safe custody continue to apply, destruction of methamphetamine stocks must be in the presence of an authorised witness and marking of containers and the keeping of records must also be observed.

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