

## **Gays' Use of Viagra and Methamphetamine Is Linked to Diseases**

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Expanding recreational use of Viagra and crystal methamphetamine is apparently behind a rise in HIV, syphilis, and other STDs among gay and bisexual men in the United States, according to new studies reported Wednesday at the National STD Prevention Conference in Philadelphia.

Dr. Samuel J. Mitchell of the San Francisco Health Department (SFHD) said a study found that 17.4 percent of 1,263 gay men who had gone to the city's STD clinic reported using crystal in the four weeks prior to their visit. Crystal users were more than twice as likely as nonusers to have HIV, 4.9 times as likely to receive a diagnosis of syphilis, and 1.7 times as likely to test positive for gonorrhea.

In a study of 388 gay men, Dr. Gordon Mansergh reported his CDC team and the SFHD found that 16 percent had used crystal the last time they had anal sex. The study found that crystal users were twice as likely as nonusers to have engaged in unprotected receptive anal intercourse. In the men's last anal sex encounter, 6 percent had used Viagra, and the Viagra users were 6.5 times more likely to report having had unprotected insertive anal sex during that encounter. Viagra was not linked to receptive anal risk behavior.

Another study found that gay men who used both Viagra and crystal together were 6.1 times as likely to be diagnosed with syphilis as those who did not use either drug, reported SFHD's Dr. William Wong.

For three consecutive years through 2003, syphilis rates fell by 50 percent among women, but increased by 65 percent among men. "We are very, very concerned" about the trend, said Dr. Ronald O. Valdiserri, deputy director of CDC's National Center for HIV, STD and TB Prevention, at a news conference at the meeting.

Seattle health officials also reported a sharp spike among gay men in cases of gonorrhea resistant to the commonly prescribed antibiotic ciprofloxacin. From October-December 2003, ciprofloxacin-resistant gonorrhea accounted for 22 of 133 cases (16.5 percent) compared with 6 of 159 cases (3.8 percent) from July-September 2003; the overwhelming majority of cases were among gay men. Such drug-resistant gonorrhea has also been reported in New York and Boston.