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Household Contamination with Methamphetamine: Knowledge and Uncertainties

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Abstract

Contamination of residential homes with methamphetamine is an emerging issue of significant concern to public health. Cooking or smoking methamphetamine in a residential property contaminates the house, furnishings and personal possessions within it, with subsequent exposure through ingestion, dermal absorption and/or inhalation causing adverse health effects. Current guidelines identifying levels of methamphetamine contamination that require remediation vary between countries. There is also no international standard protocol for measuring levels of contamination and research has shown that different materials give rise to different recovery rates of methamphetamine. There are a number of currently used remediation methods; however, they have varying levels of success with limited studies comparing their long-term efficacies. Most importantly, there are few guidelines available that are based on a transparent, health risk-based approach, and there are many uncertainties on exposures and health effects, making it difficult to ensure the health of people residing in homes that have been used to cook or smoke methamphetamine are sufficiently protected. This manuscript presents the current state of knowledge regarding the contamination of residential homes with methamphetamine and identifies the current gaps in knowledge and priority areas for future research. The current regulatory approach to public health protection associated with exposure to residential premises contaminated with methamphetamine in Australia, New Zealand and the USA is also discussed.

Keywords: guidelines; health risk; home; house; methamphetamine; third-hand exposure.

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