

## VIII. Methamphetamine

### and methcathinone

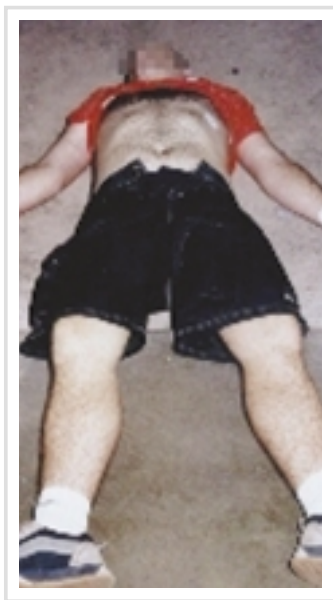
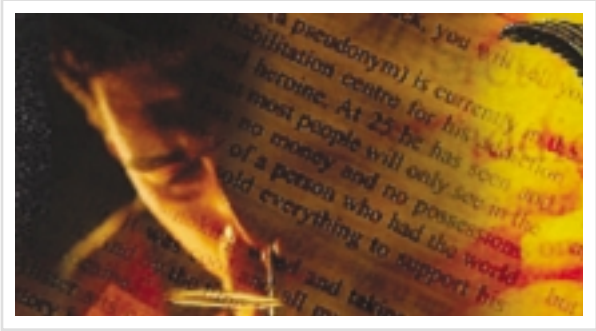
Two other amphetamine-type substances have entered the market in recent years: methcathinone ('cat') and methamphetamine ('tuk-tuk', 'straws', 'globes'). These two related stimulants appear as a white or crystalline powder or sand, and are fairly easy to manufacture from available chemicals. At present it appears that, in addition to local manufacture, methamphetamine is being imported from China. Most methcathinone is locally manufactured, and the SAPS seized 33 cat labs in 2003. Like all powerful stimulants, these drugs can keep users awake for days on end. Tolerance develops rapidly and psychological dependence is common with repeated use.

Methcathinone, which is a synthetic form of the herbal drug consumed in East Africa ('khat'), is the milder of the two, and has been described as a 'poor man's cocaine'. It has become popular in the rave scene for its energising effects. It is mostly snorted.

Methamphetamine, which in its smokeable form is internationally known as 'crystal meth', is probably the most potent stimulant consumed on the streets. Users describe an incredible sense of focus and confidence. This drug seems to have won some popularity in the coloured community, especially among gang members, who may be using it to increase aggression prior to violent confrontation. It has unfortunately become popular in parts of the Cape Flats, particularly coloured areas, but is expanding throughout the country. In the worst affected areas, use by school children is growing.

'Tuk' is often packaged in drinking straws burnt closed at the ends, but other wraps may be used. The most common method of smoking 'tuk' is through a light globe from which the metal bits have been removed. The drug is placed in the globe, heated, and the fumes inhaled through a straw. More experienced users may invest in specialty glass pipes. Trace elements of the drug could be acquired from this paraphernalia, and they should be seized as evidence.

These drugs are much longer lasting in their effects than cocaine. Overdose on these drugs can result in



'amphetamine psychosis', a recognised psychiatric condition. Deprived of sleep and over-stimulated, the user may panic and become violent, manifesting magnified physical strength. They may feel they have bugs crawling under their skin, and suffer from other delusions and paranoia. Pupils will be enlarged, and heart rate, blood pressure, and temperature will all be increased. Teeth grinding and jaw clenching are common.