



NewsTrack - Science

Research shows meth increases HIV spread

BUFFALO, N.Y., Aug. 4 (UPI) -- Methamphetamine can promote the spread of HIV-1 in users, researchers at the University of Buffalo have found.

Use of methamphetamine increases production of a docking protein that enables the spread of the HIV-1 virus in infected users, said Madhavan P.N. Nair, a professor of medicine and a specialist in immunology in the UB School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, and the lead author of the study.

"This finding shows that using meth is doubly dangerous," said Nair. "Meth reduces inhibitions, thus increasing the likelihood of risky sexual behavior and the potential to introduce the virus into the body, and at the same time allows more virus to get into the cell."

The study -- published in the online version of the Journal of Neuroimmune Pharmacology -- focuses on dendritic cells, which serve as defense against pathogens. When the cells become overloaded with virus due to the action of methamphetamine, the immune response can be disrupted, promoting the spread of HIV.

"Now that we have identified the target receptor, we can develop ways to block that receptor and decrease the viral spread," said Nair. "We have to approach this disease from as many different perspectives as possible."

© Copyright 2006 United Press International, Inc. All Rights Reserved