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For immediate release

## World-first trial of medication for 'ice' addiction

**In a world-first, Australian researchers are trialling a new medication to help people who are dependent on crystal methamphetamine, or 'ice'.**

Called the N-ICE Trial, researchers are investigating if N-Acetyl Cysteine, or NAC, can reduce cravings for ice and help people stop using the substance.

The N-ICE Trial is being conducted at frontline clinical services in Wollongong, Geelong and Melbourne. Further information about participation in the trial can be found at [www.nicetrial.info](http://www.nicetrial.info)

Funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council, the National Drug Research Institute (NDRI) at Curtin University is leading the randomised controlled N-ICE trial in collaboration with Deakin University, Monash University, the University of Wollongong, the University of Newcastle, La Trobe University and the Burnet Institute.

Lead researcher and NDRI Associate Professor Rebecca McKetin said previous studies showed NAC could reduce cravings for methamphetamine use and other substances including cocaine, cannabis and tobacco.

NAC is one of a new generation of medications being trialled for addiction. It targets glutamate changes in the brain that are thought to underpin drug craving and addiction.

"When someone first takes ice they experience the desirable effects of intoxication. But if they continue to use, and become dependent, changes occur in the brain that cause cravings, making it hard to stop using ice," Professor McKetin said.

"NAC helps to reduce cravings by restoring the balance of chemicals in the brain that are involved in craving and drug seeking, making it easier for people to manage their desire for the drug."

Dr Olivia Dean from Deakin University's IMPACT Strategic Research Centre said: "NAC is an amino acid derivative that has many actions that might be useful for people who are trying to stop taking ice."

"NAC can protect against the neurotoxic effects of ice and it is hoped that, in addition to helping people dependent on ice cut down or stop their use, NAC will reduce the mood changes that are often experienced as a result of ice addiction."

Associate Professor Peter Kelly from the University of Wollongong, who is affiliated with the Illawarra Health and Medical Research Institute, said there was currently no approved medication to treat addiction to ice and this was a significant barrier to users seeking treatment.

"The main forms of treatment are counselling interventions and residential rehabilitation. For this reason trialling NAC introduces a novel approach to treating ice addiction," he said.

"The hope is that NAC can help break the addiction cycle and help people stop using ice."

Dr Brendan Quinn from the Burnet Institute in Melbourne explained: "Many people who use ice do not access these traditional treatment options."

“Over-stretched services with wait lists, the need for lengthy residential stays, stigma and fears about confidentiality are among the reasons people don’t get treatment,” Dr Quinn said.

“We are hoping this take-home medication can help people who aren’t accessing these conventional drug treatment options to reduce or stop their ice use.”

*A website has been set up for people interested in the N-ICE Trial. For more information, visit [www.nicetrial.info](http://www.nicetrial.info)*

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