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Methamphetamine abuse is fast becoming ubiquitous. Various studies by the United Nations show that methamphetamine is consumed in almost every region of the world, is fast outstripping cocaine and heroin as the drug of choice, and is the single most frequently reported illicitly manufactured drug (United Nations, 1997). Since the mid-1980s, the world in general and the Pacific region in particular have experienced a huge increase in methamphetamine abuse, with nine times the quantity seized in 1993 as was seized in 1978 (United Nations, 1997). In the U.S., as of 1990, an estimated 5.2 million persons 12 years of age and older reported using methamphetamine at least once (National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, 1991). In 1991, 7% of respondents in a large survey reported using methamphetamine at least once, with the highest use in the 18- to 25-year-old age group (Kaplan et al., 1994).

U.S. Department of Justice statistics show that, for the period from 1990 to 1996, 64% of high school seniors could easily obtain methamphetamine. Step-by-step instructions to manufacture methamphetamine are on the Internet. Nearly half of all methamphetamine users will develop cardiovascular symptoms, with the percentage higher in chronic abusers (Lynch and House, 1992; Beebe and Walley, 1995). One third of heavy users will develop bizarre, frankly psychotic behavior and will suffer hallucinations (Griffith, Cavanaugh, and Oats, 1969; Bell, 1973). As illustrated in [Figure 2.1](#), brain deterioration in heavy users may continue for months after abstinence. Psychosis can occur after only one dose (Ando et al., 1986). Ando et al. observed signs in individuals they evaluated that are strongly suggestive of brain damage after a single usage.

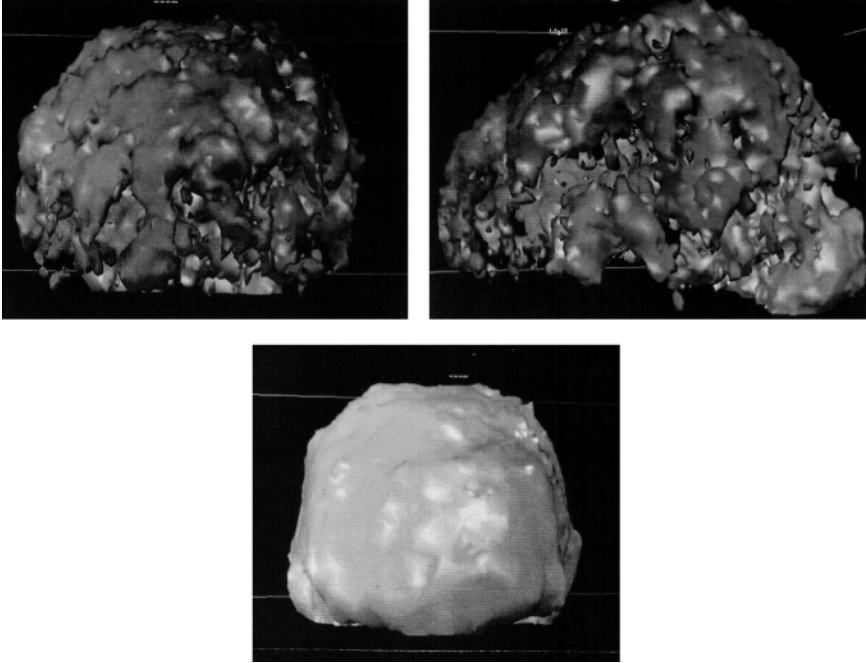


Figure 2.1 Top left: frontal view of brain of young, adult male. No more “ice” use but progressive damage four months later (March 1996). Top right: lateral view of same individual. Bottom: normal brain of young adult male. (Scans courtesy of Queen’s Medical Center, Honolulu, Hawaii.)

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