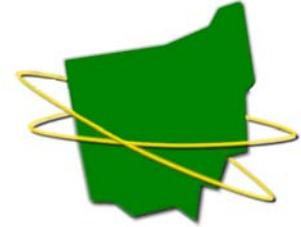




# OSAM-O-GRAM

DATE: April 2003  
DATELINE: Ohio



Wright State University  
The University of Akron

## Dramatic Upsurge in Powdered Cocaine Use

In January 2003, the OSAM Network reported significant increases in the availability and abuse of powdered cocaine in all regions of the state except the Akron-Canton area. User and treatment provider reports have been corroborated by Miami Valley Crime Lab evidence suggesting that powdered cocaine now is “flooding the streets.”

According to active and recovering users, the prices for powdered cocaine have dropped to new lows. Currently, a gram sells for about \$40-60, compared to \$60-100 less than two years ago. Although most active users reported that the quality of powdered cocaine was very poor, reports from the Miami Valley Crime lab suggest the purity of street-level samples often reaches or exceeds 80%.

Powdered cocaine is still considered a “glamorous” drug and is often perceived as less dangerous and more acceptable than crack cocaine. Its abuse remains more common among individuals of higher socio-economic standing who consider cocaine use as a social or “recreational” activity rather than a form of drug abuse. However, due to increasing availability and decreasing prices, powdered cocaine is becoming more accessible to younger and more diverse user groups. As one user from the Columbus area put it,

*People that normally didn't abuse... I've seen them more and more abusing [powdered cocaine] everyday. Just people that you wouldn't even begin to think that would abuse [powdered cocaine] 'cause it's so easy to get a hold of...*

Powdered cocaine is reportedly increasing in popularity among white youth, some in their teens and early 20s who frequent raves and dance clubs. Abuse of the drug is becoming more visible in the inner city communities, especially among adolescents and young adults.

Snorting remains the most common method of administration, especially among young users. Injection is less common, but according to some user and treatment provider reports, might even be on the increase, especially among older heroin addicts. As one active drug user from the Dayton area put it,

*The speedball [mixing heroin and powdered cocaine for injection] is the “thing” now 'cause it's so much cocaine around, ya know. It used to be you didn't even worry about powder cocaine 'cause it was so hard to find... [Now] any heroin house you go to, there's probably cocaine close... Everybody that's selling heroin has got good powder cocaine to go with the heroin.*

Powdered cocaine abuse, while not as prevalent as crack-cocaine abuse, has been significantly increasing among diverse user groups over the past six months. The trend will likely become more visible to treatment providers in the near future.

OSAM-O-GRAMS report key findings of the Ohio Substance Abuse Monitoring (OSAM) Network. Informants located throughout the state use qualitative and quantitative data to provide semiannual monitoring of substance abuse trends. The OSAM Network is funded by the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services by contract to Wright State University and by subcontract to the University of Akron. This OSAM-O-GRAM is based on the January 2003 OSAM Network meeting.

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