

Not infrequently, the amphetamine abuser committing homicide is attacking an imaginary assailant or persecutor created in his paranoid delusional thinking.

The violent act may take place in a state of terror or panic, often secondary to misinterpretation of events or delusions.

Perhaps equally important is the influence of amphetamines in creating:

1. Impulsive or reactivity, and

2. a liability of mood in which the user abruptly vacillates from a warm congeniality to fiercely hostile moods for the most trivial of reasons—Kramer, 1969; Ellinwood, 1971a.

The drug subculture of amphetamine abuser, of course, is involved frequently in criminal activity in order to support drug use.

The amphetamine abuser may suddenly panic and react violently while involved in an armed robbery.

At times, this reaction is touched off by a bizarre feeling such as being suddenly and furiously angry because the storekeeper "smiled at me."

In the study of amphetamine abusers committing homicide—which I carried out—Ellinwood, 1971a—7 of the 13 subjects were acutely psychotic and delusional at the time, and this disturbance of thought appeared to be directly related to the homicide.

Four persons were primarily in an amphetamine-induced emotionally labile state.

Paranoid ideation may have been involved in these cases, but it was not the most salient feature.

Two persons with low impulse control had also been drinking at the time the homicide occurred.

In two cases, homicide was associated with armed robbery and this appeared to be the primary contributing condition.

Although the killers were high on amphetamines at the time, it is difficult to assess the relative importance of this and other factors since by far the most important factor was the flow of events associated with the armed robbery.

Both of these men stated that they were obtaining money to buy drugs. Twelve of 13 persons committing homicide were carrying concealed weapons at the time.

Many speed users carry weapons, ostensibly for a variety of reasons including:

1. For use in armed robbery.

2. Because of their suspiciousness and fears—often he has "heard someone breaking in at night" or he becomes increasingly fearful of his persecution and begins carrying a gun, and

3. There is a certain amount of "cowboy and Indian" braggadocio involved in carrying guns by speed users.

Anyone working with amphetamine addicts will hear stories of individuals sitting all night with a loaded gun waiting for fantacized intruders to enter.

Under these conditions, speed freaks have been known to shoot at hallucinated noises or images.

Amphetamine facilitated violence is not peculiar to the United States; similar reports of bizarre aggression as well as homicide come from Sweden, Japan, and England.