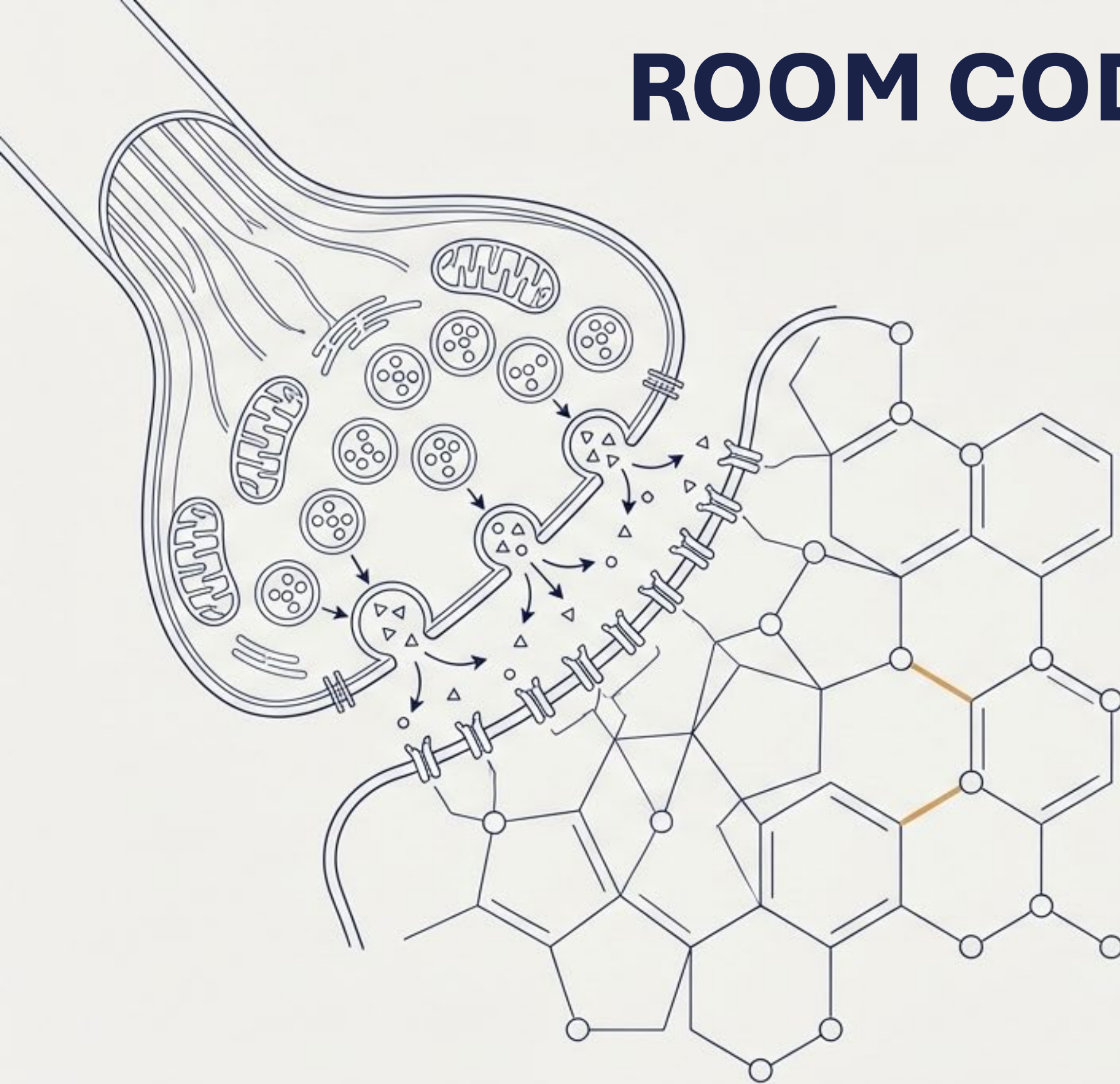


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The Crystal Clear Story: Science, and Impact of Methamphetamine

Bridging the historical shift in illicit production with the clinical realities of neurotoxicity, psychosis, and evidence-based treatment.

Hildebrando “Brando” Mireles III, LPC-S, PhD Candidate
Chief Clinical Officer – Camino Real

Disclosure to Learners

2026 Texas Council Conference

June 10-12, 2026



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Texas Department of State
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- Miss no more than 15 minutes of the activity or each session.
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Texas Department of State
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- Licensed Psychologists (LP)
- Physicians (CME)

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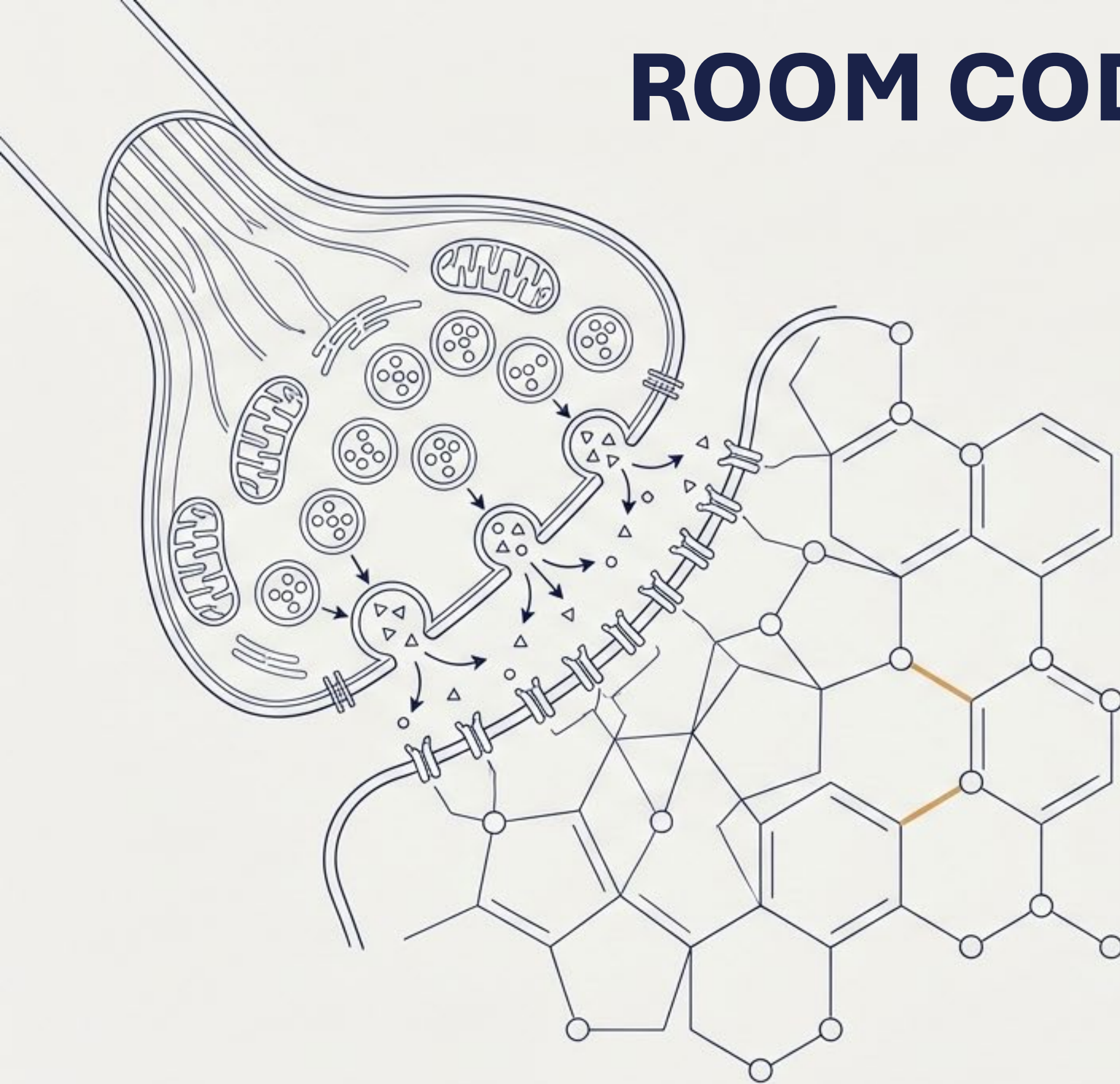
Accredited status does not imply endorsement of any commercial products or services by the Texas Department of State Health Services, Texas Medical Association, or American Nurses Credentialing Center.

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The Crystal Clear Story: Science, and Impact of Methamphetamine

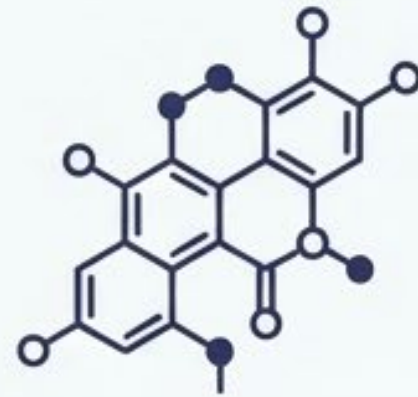
Bridging the historical shift in illicit production with the clinical realities of neurotoxicity, psychosis, and evidence-based treatment.

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Learning Objectives



Summarize the origins of methamphetamine, its early uses, and how its role evolved over time in medicine and illicit markets.



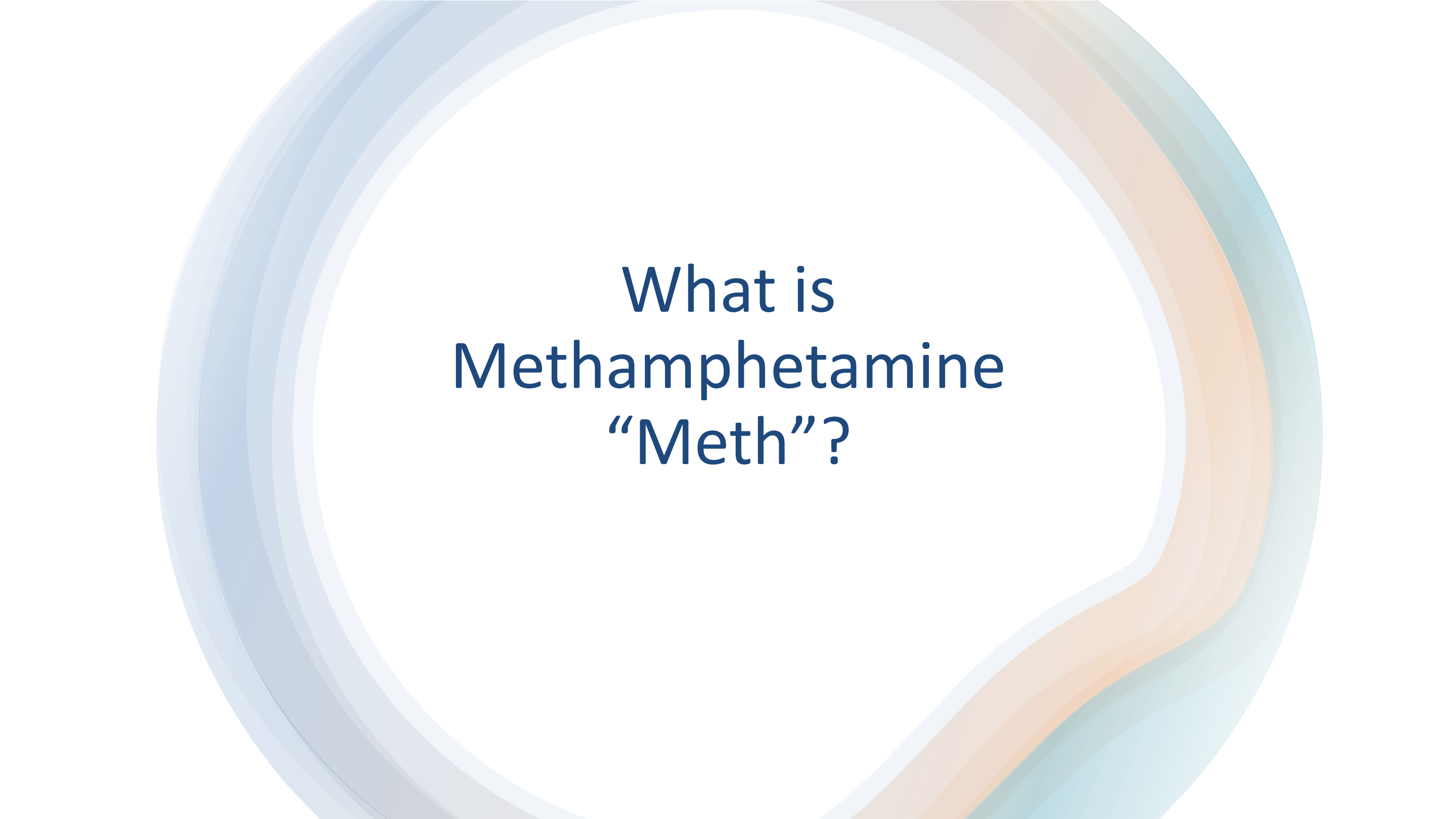
Describe the key chemical components of methamphetamine and how they interact with the central nervous system to produce stimulant effects.



Assess the short-term and long-term physiological and psychological effects of methamphetamine use, including addiction, organ damage, and mental health consequences.



Evaluate evidence-based intervention and treatment approaches for methamphetamine and other stimulant use disorders, including considerations for co-occurring substance use.

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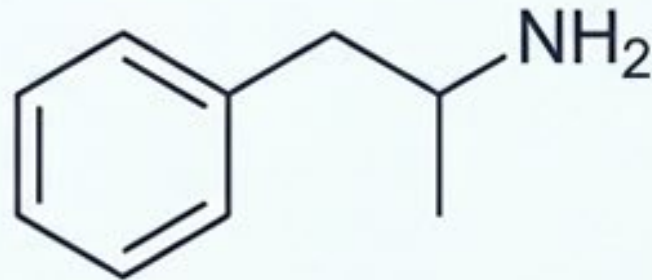
What is Methamphetamine “Meth”?

What is Methamphetamine?

Crystal Methamphetamine

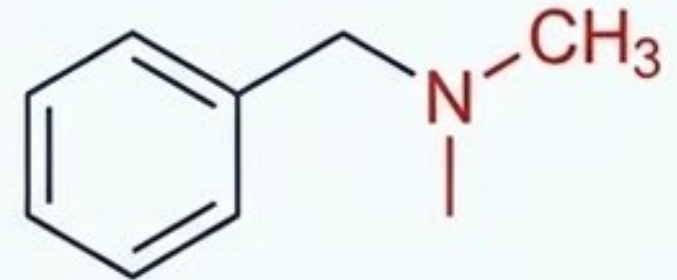


Amphetamine
(e.g., Adderall)



Base stimulant structure.

Methamphetamine
(Meth)

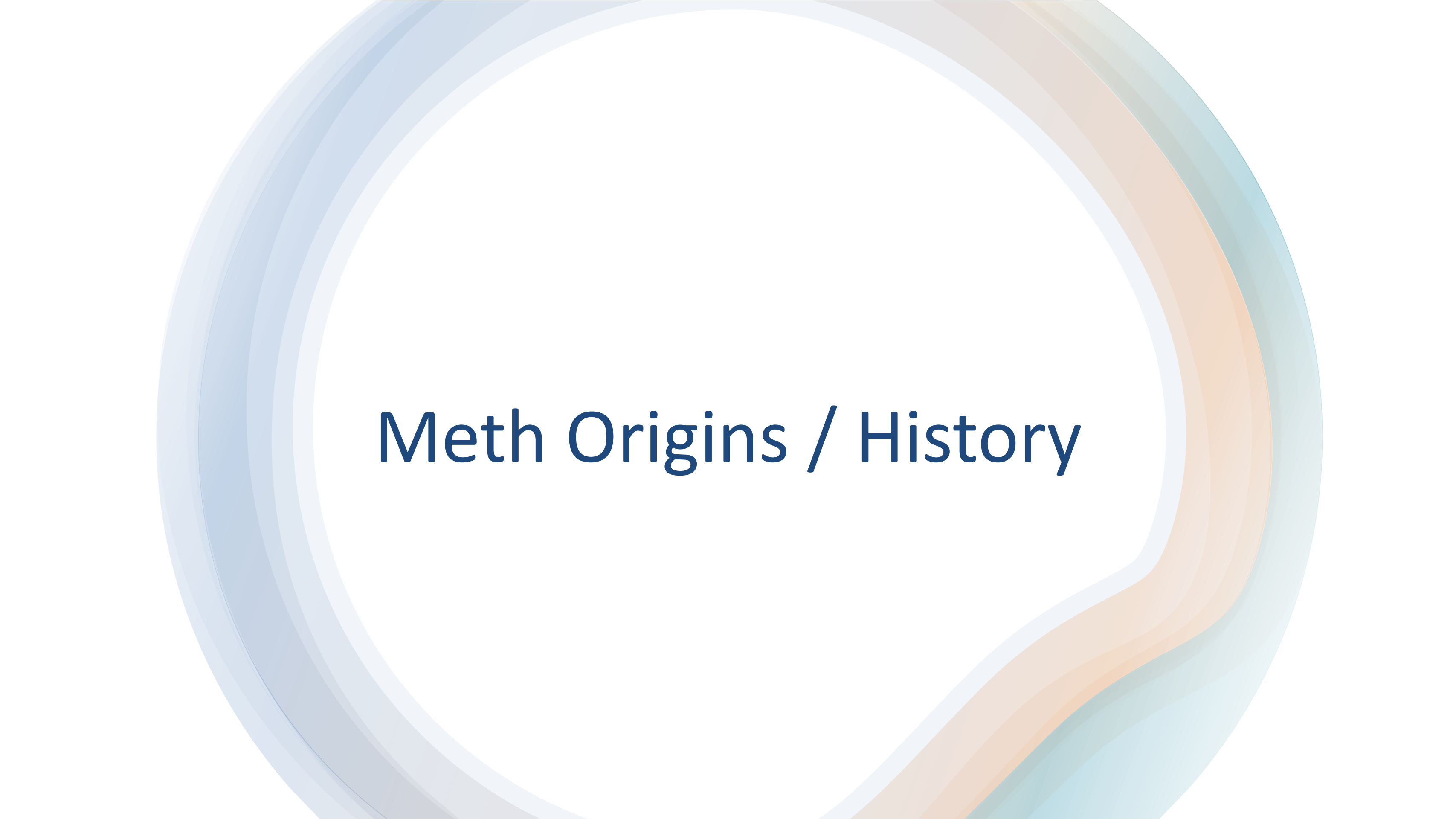


Added Methyl Group = More Potent & Faster Action.

Methamphetamine is chemically similar to amphetamine but the added methyl group allows it to enter the brain more rapidly, resulting in a more intense and longer-lasting effect on the central nervous system.

Meth is synthetic
meaning it is
composed
chemically by
“Cooks.”



The background features a large, light blue circle on the left and a wavy, multi-colored line (orange, teal, and light blue) on the right, both set against a white background.

Meth Origins / History

The Botanical and Chemical Origins

The original Breaking Bad



The Ephedra Shrub

- Contains natural alkaloids. Utilized for over 5,000 years in traditional Chinese medicine for respiratory ailments and asthma.



1885 / 1893

Japanese chemist Nagayoshi Nagayoshi isolates ephedrine and synthesizes methamphetamine, creating an N-methylated derivative with potent CNS effects.



1919

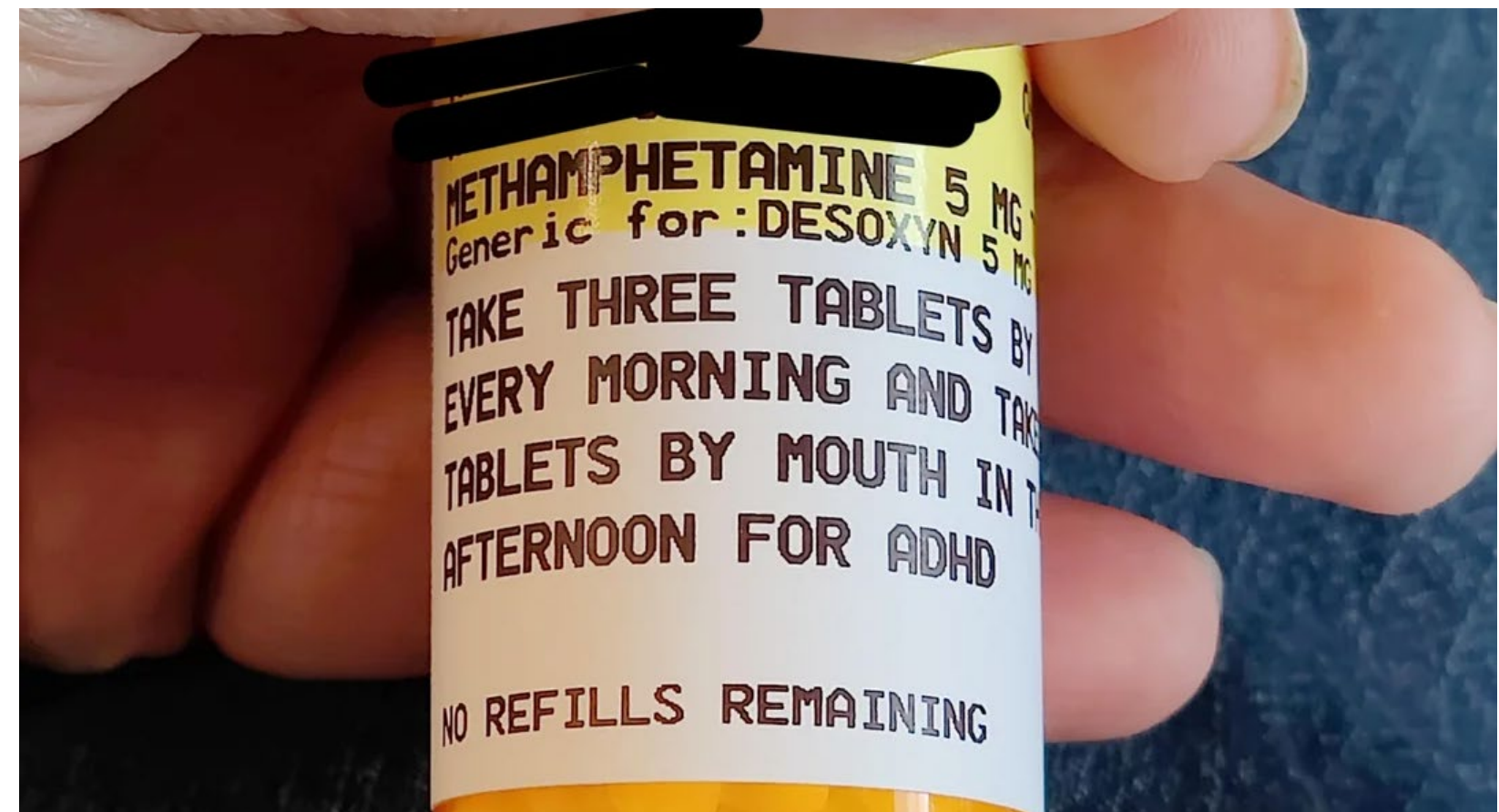
Akira Ogata refines the synthesis process using red phosphorus and iodine to reduce ephedrine, creating the world's first crystallized methamphetamine.

Pharmaceutical Products: The Amphetamine Family

From legitimate medicine to illicit crisis — tracing methamphetamine and amphetamine through the pharmaceutical record

Brand Name	Active Ingredient	Classification	Primary Indication	Era / Current Status
Pervitin	Methamphetamine HCl	METHAMPHETAMINE	Military stimulant / fatigue	1938 (Temmler, Germany) — Discontinued
Desoxyn	Methamphetamine HCl	METHAMPHETAMINE	ADHD / Obesity (last-line)	FDA approved 1943 — Still available (Sched. II)
Obetrol	Methamphetamine + Amphetamine salts	METH + AMPHETAMINE	Obesity	FDA 1960 — Withdrawn 1973; became Adderall
Benzedrine	Amphetamine sulfate	AMPHETAMINE	Nasal congestion / Narcolepsy	1933 (Smith, Kline & French) — Discontinued
Dexedrine	Dextroamphetamine sulfate	AMPHETAMINE	ADHD / Narcolepsy	Pre-1982 — Generic still available (Sched. II)
Adderall / Adderall XR	Mixed amphetamine salts (75:25 d:l)	AMPHETAMINE	ADHD / Narcolepsy	FDA 1996 — Widely prescribed (Sched. II)
Vyvanse	Lisdexamfetamine dimesylate (prodrug)	AMPHETAMINE (prodrug)	ADHD / Binge Eating Disorder	FDA 2007 — Widely prescribed (Sched. II)
Evekeo	Amphetamine sulfate (50:50 d:l)	AMPHETAMINE	ADHD / Narcolepsy / Obesity	FDA 2012 — Currently available (Sched. II)

■ METHAMPHETAMINE | ■ AMPHETAMINE | All products listed are Schedule II controlled substances under the CSA



Psyche und Kreislauf



Depressionen
Hypotonie
Müdigkeit
Narkolepsie
postoperative
Rekonvaleszenz

Pervitin

1-Phenyl-2-methylamino-propan-hydrochlorid



The Wartime Catalyst & Civilian Epidemics



The Legislative Squeeze & The Market Vacuum

Pre-2005: The "Shake-and-Bake" Era

Widespread domestic clandestine labs utilizing easily accessible pseudoephedrine from over-the-counter cold medications.



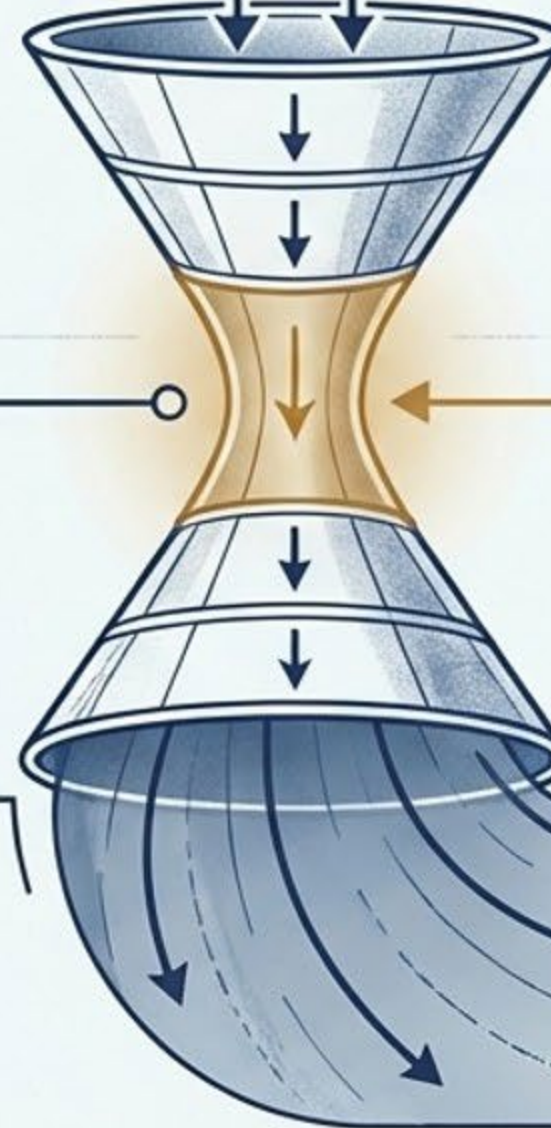
The Bottleneck: Combat Methamphetamine Epidemic Act of 2005

Mandated pharmacies move pseudoephedrine behind the counter, restricted purchase quantities, and required logging.



The Unintended Consequence: Industrial Expansion

The collapse of small-scale domestic production created a market vacuum. Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) in Mexico rapidly filled this void, permanently shifting the manufacturing paradigm to industrial scales.



The Evolution of Methamphetamine: From Ephedra to the P2P Paradigm

1885–1960s: Origins and Global Institutionalization

Tracing over a century of development, this timeline tracks methamphetamine's journey from its 19th-century synthesis to its institutional use in World War II, followed by its cultural normalization and the modern emergence of high-potency "Super Meth." It highlights how chemical precursors and regulations have fundamentally shaped the drug's availability and clinical impact.



1885–1919: The Foundation of Synthetic Stimulants
Nagai Nagayoshi isolates ephedrine (1885) and synthesizes meth (1893) before Akira Ogata creates the first crystallized form (1919).



1930s–1940s: Pharmaceuticals and the Frontlines of War
Benzedrine and Pervitin are mass-produced and issued to military forces to enhance endurance and alertness during WWII.



1950s–1960s: Medical Use and Cultural Normalization
Methamphetamine becomes a common prescription for obesity (Obetrol) and a staple of the "Beat Generation" culture.

1970–Present: Regulation and the Industrial Shift



1970–2005: Regulatory Crackdowns and Precursor Shifts
The 1970 Controlled Substances Act and 2005 Combat Meth Act strictly regulate usage and cold medicine precursors.



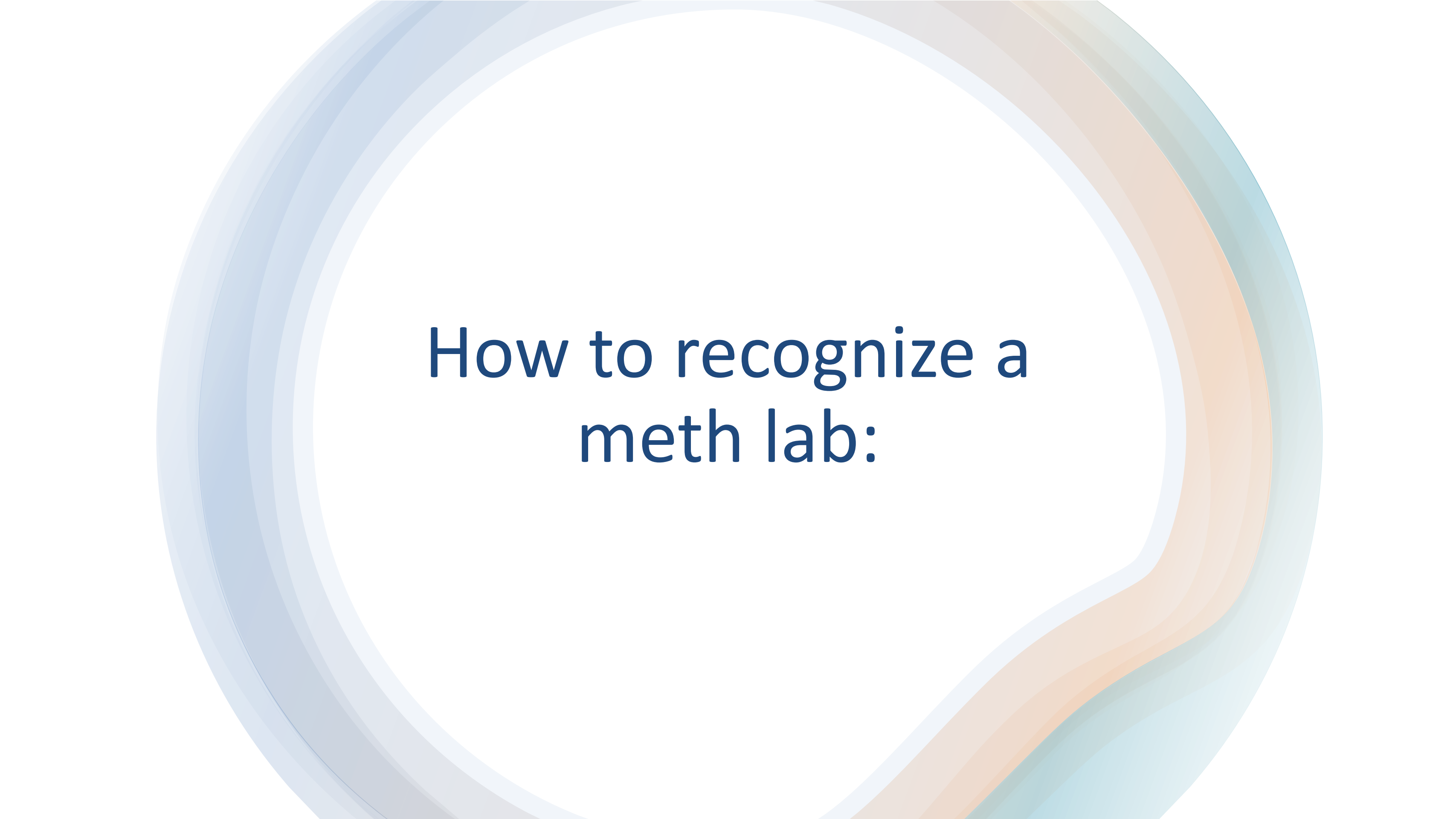
1980s–1990s: The Rise of Clandestine Laboratories
Domestic illegal labs pivot to using pseudoephedrine found in over-the-counter medications to circumvent chemical restrictions.



Modern Era: The Industrial "Super Meth" Crisis
Mexican Transnational Criminal Organizations shift to P2P synthesis, producing a high-potency, highly neurotoxic product.

Precursor Evolution and Synthesis Methods

Era	Primary Precursor	Dominant Synthesis Method
1885 – 1970s	Ephedrine	Medicinal/Pharmaceutical 
1980s – 2005	Pseudoephedrine	Clandestine "One-Pot" / Shake-and-Bake 
2010s – Present	Phenyl-2-Propanone (P2P)	Industrial-Scale TCO Production 

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How to recognize a
meth lab:

Recognizing a Clandestine Methamphetamine Laboratory

Environmental Red Flags

Chemical Odors

- ▶ Ammonia (cat urine), ether, acetone, paint thinner, rotten eggs, or vinegar

Property Modifications

- ▶ Blacked-out or foil-covered windows, unusual ventilation (fans in winter), elaborate security measures

Dead Vegetation

- ▶ Burn pits, dead spots in grass from chemical dumping

Unusual Activity

- ▶ Frequent visitors at odd hours, excessive trash with chemical containers

Equipment & Chemical Indicators

Precursor Materials

- ▶ Large quantities of cold medicine (pseudoephedrine), lithium batteries torn apart, drain cleaner, starter fluid

Lab Equipment

- ▶ Glass cookware with residue, plastic bottles with tubes, rubber hoses, funnels, respiratory masks

Waste Residue

- ▶ Red-stained coffee filters, multi-layered liquids, white powdery residue on surfaces

Anhydrous Ammonia Tanks

- ▶ Gas cylinders with blue-discolored brass valves (chemical reaction marker)

Clinical Exposure Symptoms

Acute Exposure Signs

- ▶ Respiratory distress, coughing, chest tightness, eye and skin irritation, chemical burns

Neurological Symptoms

- ▶ Headache, dizziness, confusion, disorientation, nausea

Chronic / Residential Exposure

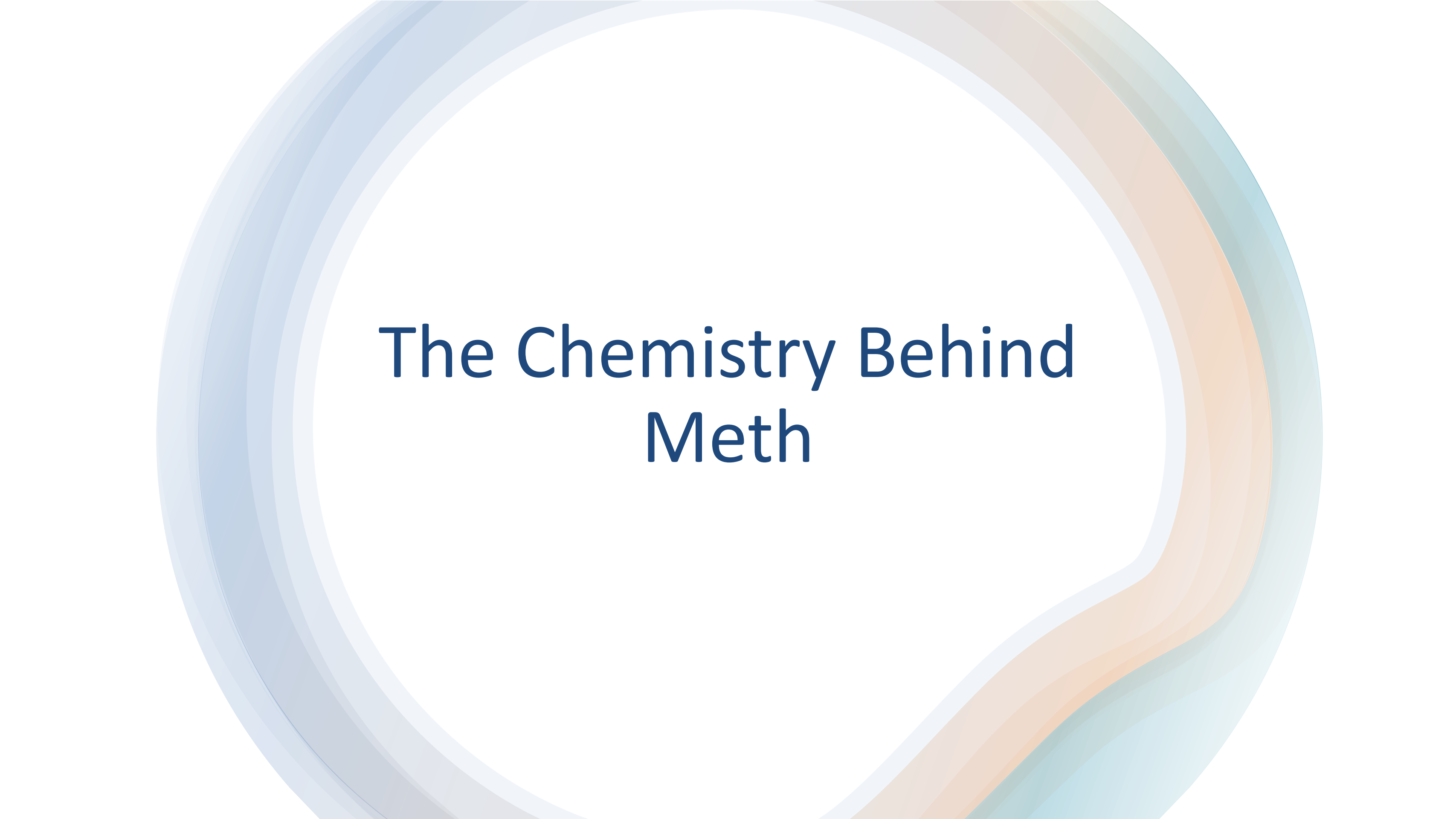
- ▶ Persistent respiratory illness, skin rashes, neurological deficits in occupants and especially children

Pediatric Vulnerability

- ▶ Children at highest risk due to floor-level exposure, hand-to-mouth behavior, and developing organ systems

SAFETY IMPERATIVE

Do NOT enter, touch, or investigate a suspected lab. Treat as a HazMat scene. Evacuate, call 911, and decontaminate any exposed persons. One pound of meth produces six pounds of toxic waste. Residual contamination persists in walls, carpets, and HVAC systems long after a lab is dismantled.

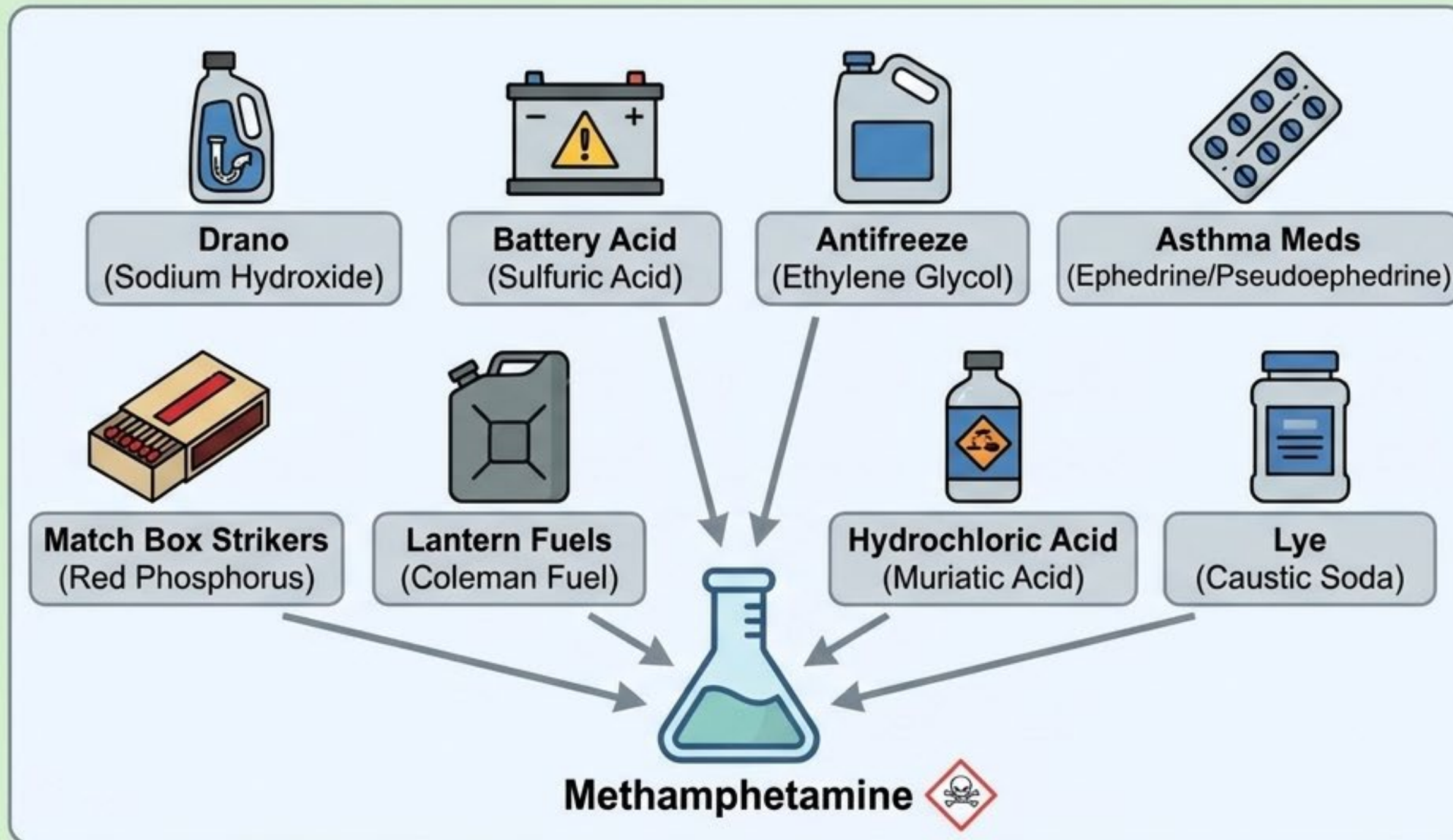


The Chemistry Behind Meth

The Production Shift: Ephedrine vs. P2P “Super Meth”

Dimension	The Ephedrine Era	The P2P Era
Precursor Chemical	Pseudoephedrine (from cold medicine)	Phenyl-2-Propanone (an industrial chemical)
Manufacturing Scale	Small, domestic “shake-and-bake” labs	Mexican TCOs operating massive clandestine industrial facilities
Chemical Impurities	Lithium, battery acid	Cyanide, nitrostyrene, racing fuel, lead
Clinical Presentation	Social/talkative euphoria, gradual physical decline	Rapid onset of severe paranoia, immediate social isolation, pronounced neurotoxicity

The Toxic Ingredients of Methamphetamine



Takeaway: Methamphetamine is produced using highly volatile and poisonous common household chemicals, posing severe health and environmental risks.

Family Impacts and Risks

Children's Exposure & Fumes



Danger of children's exposure to toxic chemical fumes; severe implications for respiratory and neurological development.

Prenatal Risks & Explosion



Risks of pregnant women exposure affecting fetal health. High risk of explosions, fires, and structural damage.

Chemical Burns on People & Pets



Direct contact causes severe chemical burns on adults, children, and pets (pets are not immune).

Weapons & Unsanitary Conditions



Exposure to weapons, unsanitary conditions, and hazardous waste in production environments.

Drug Schedules I-V: Potential for Abuse & Examples

HIGH
Potential for Abuse



LOW
Potential for Abuse



SCHEDULE I

No Accepted Medical Use

Heroin, LSD, Ecstasy



SCHEDULE II

High Abuse Potential, Severe Restrictions

Cocaine, Fentanyl,

Cocain, Fentanyl, METHAMPHETAMINE



SCHEDULE III

Moderate to Low Abuse Potential

Ketamine, Anabolic Steroids



SCHEDULE IV

Low Abuse Potential

Xanax, Valium

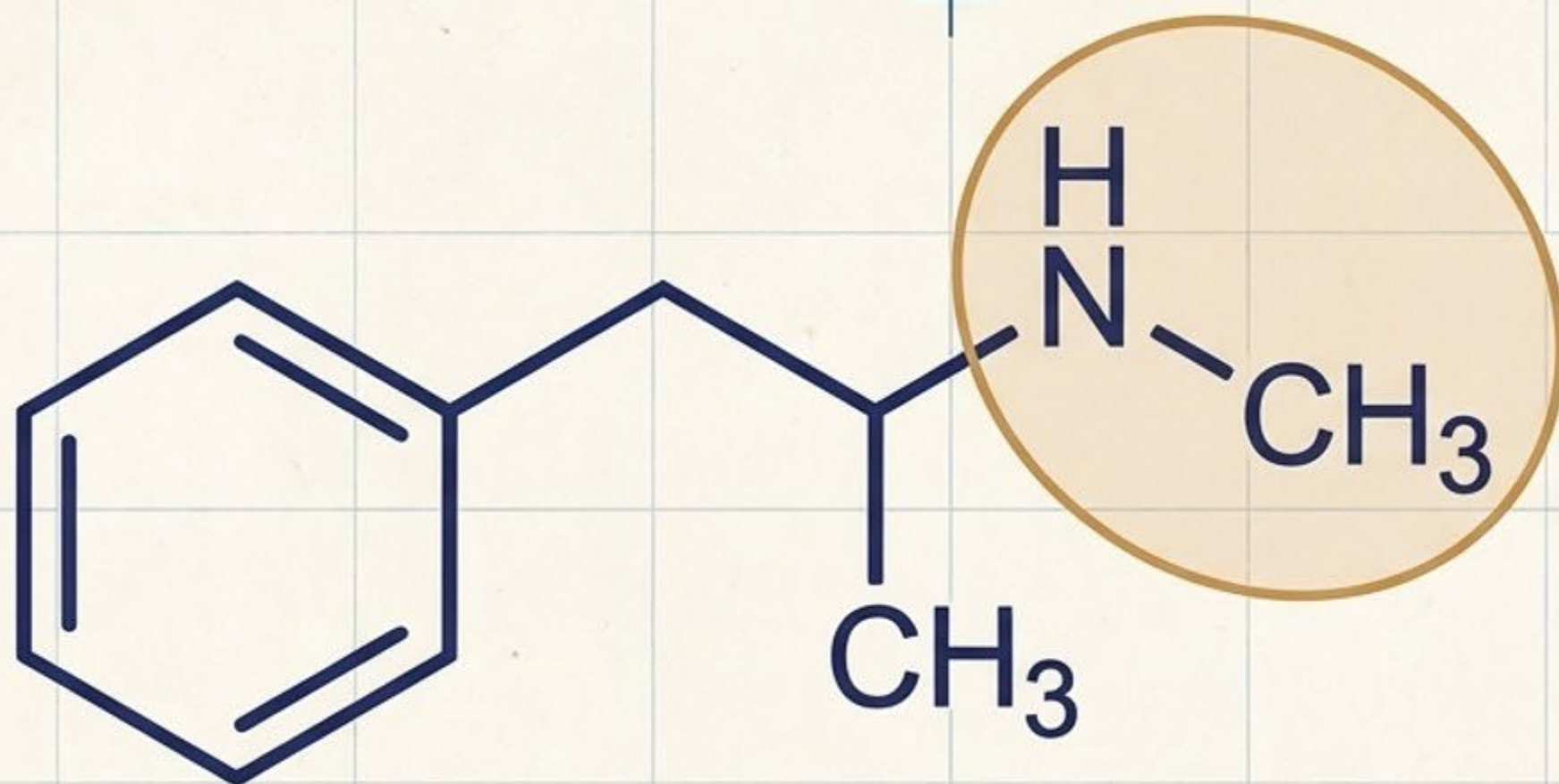


SCHEDULE V

Lowest Abuse Potential

Cough preparations with codeine

Chemical Architecture & The Lipophilicity Factor



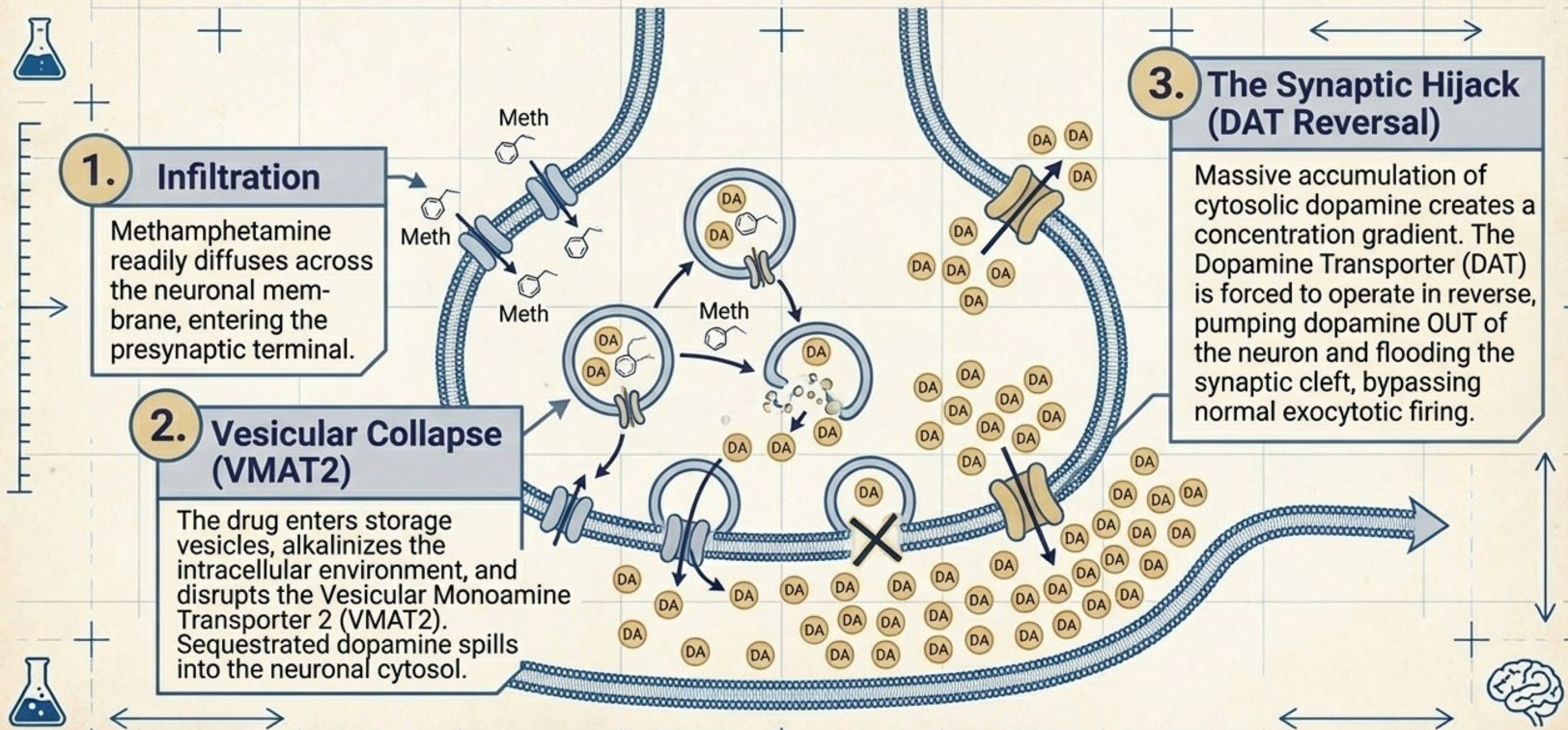
The Crucial Methyl Addition

Methamphetamine (C₁₀H₁₅N) shares a phenylethylamine core with amphetamine. This specific methyl addition significantly enhances lipid solubility.

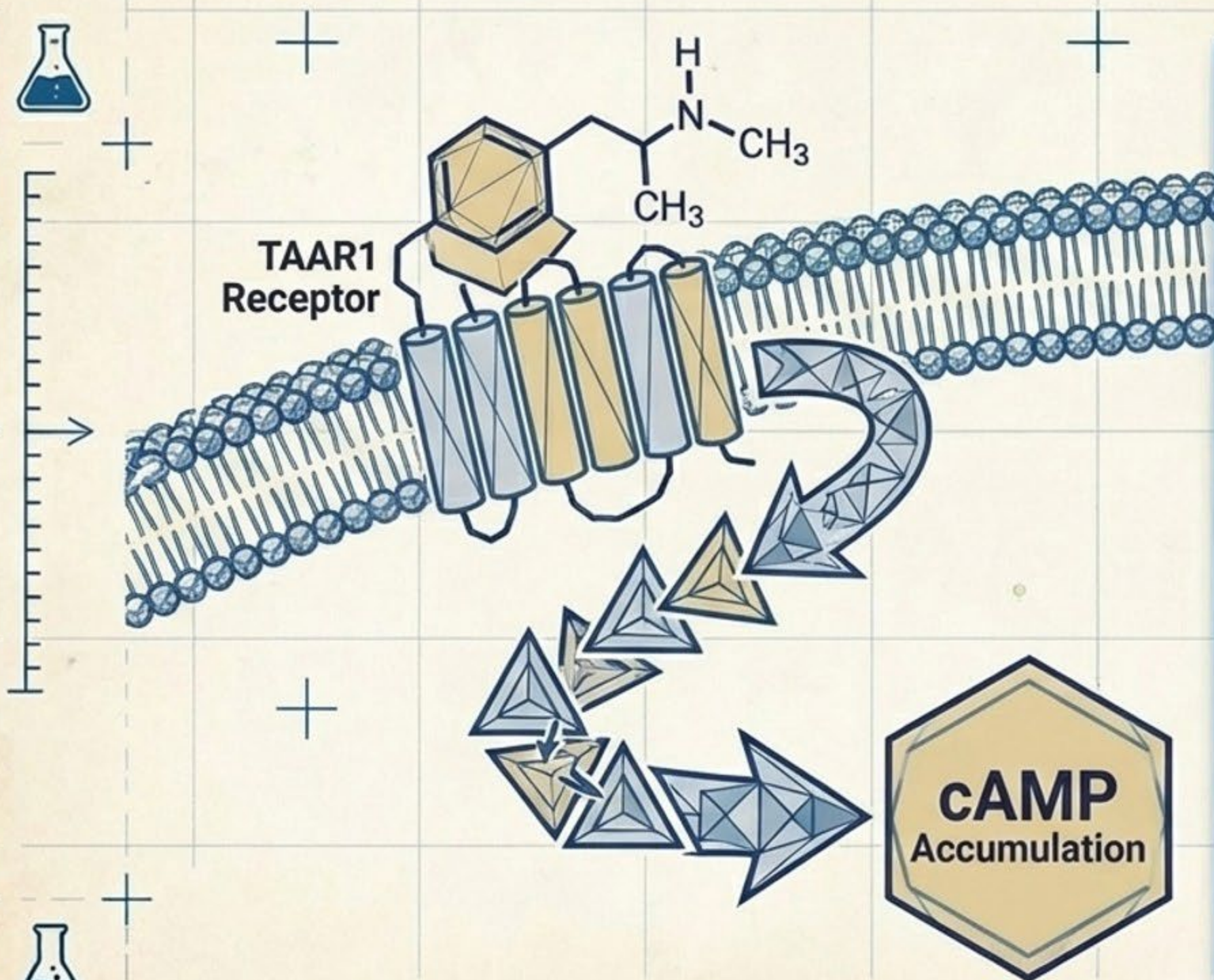
Clinical Impact: Ultra-Rapid Penetration

High lipophilicity enables the molecule to aggressively bypass the Blood-Brain Barrier (BBB), resulting in an immediate, intense, and highly neurotoxic effect on the Central Nervous System.

The Synaptic Hijack: VMAT2 & DAT Reversal



TAAR1 Agonism: Beyond Transporter Blockade



1. The Target: TAAR1

Methamphetamine acts as a full agonist at the presynaptic Trace Amine-Associated Receptor 1 (TAAR1).

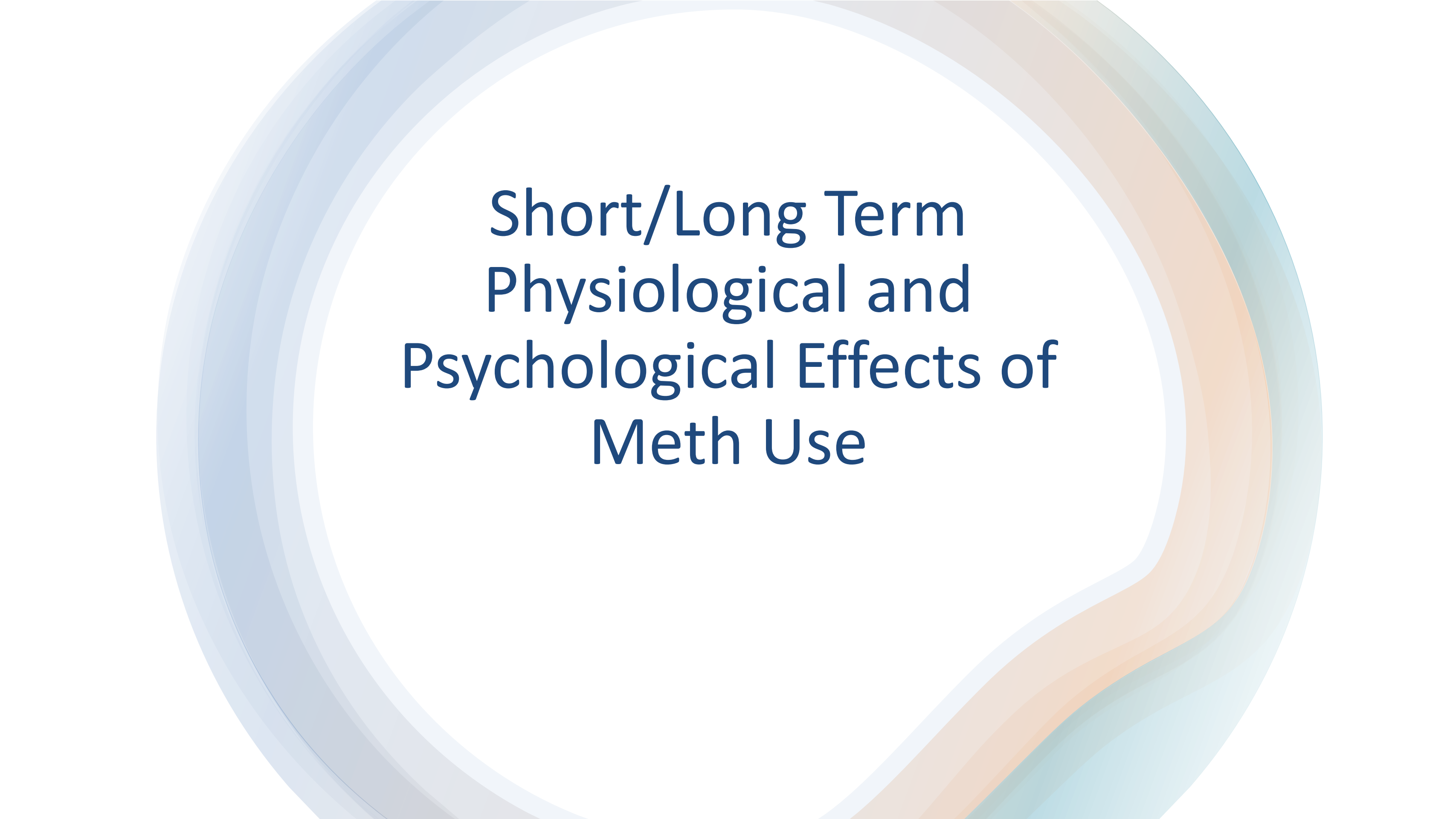
2. The Signaling Cascade

Activation stimulates G-alpha-s proteins, driving the rapid, massive accumulation of intracellular cyclic AMP (cAMP).

3. The Duality of TAAR1

Modulation: Inhibits dopamine uptake and modulates firing rates of dopaminergic neurons in the Ventral Tegmental Area (VTA).

Vulnerability: Alterations in these pathways are directly implicated in profound neurotoxicity and impaired thermoregulation in chronic abuse.

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Short/Long Term Physiological and Psychological Effects of Meth Use

Acute Effects & The Hyperthermic Cascade



Stage 1: Acute Intoxication

Supraphysiologic monoamine release causes intense euphoria, tachycardia, and a massive adrenergic surge.



Stage 2: Severe Hyperthermia

Core body temperatures dangerously elevate, often reaching 39–42°C (102–107°F), severely disrupting cellular homeostasis.



Stage 3: Metabolic Impairment



Extreme heat damages hepatocyte mitochondria. The liver's ability to metabolize ammonia via the urea cycle is critically impaired.



Stage 4: Systemic Oxidative Stress



Plasma ammonia concentrations rise, exacerbating the generation of Reactive Oxygen Species (ROS) and triggering widespread, systemic cellular injury.



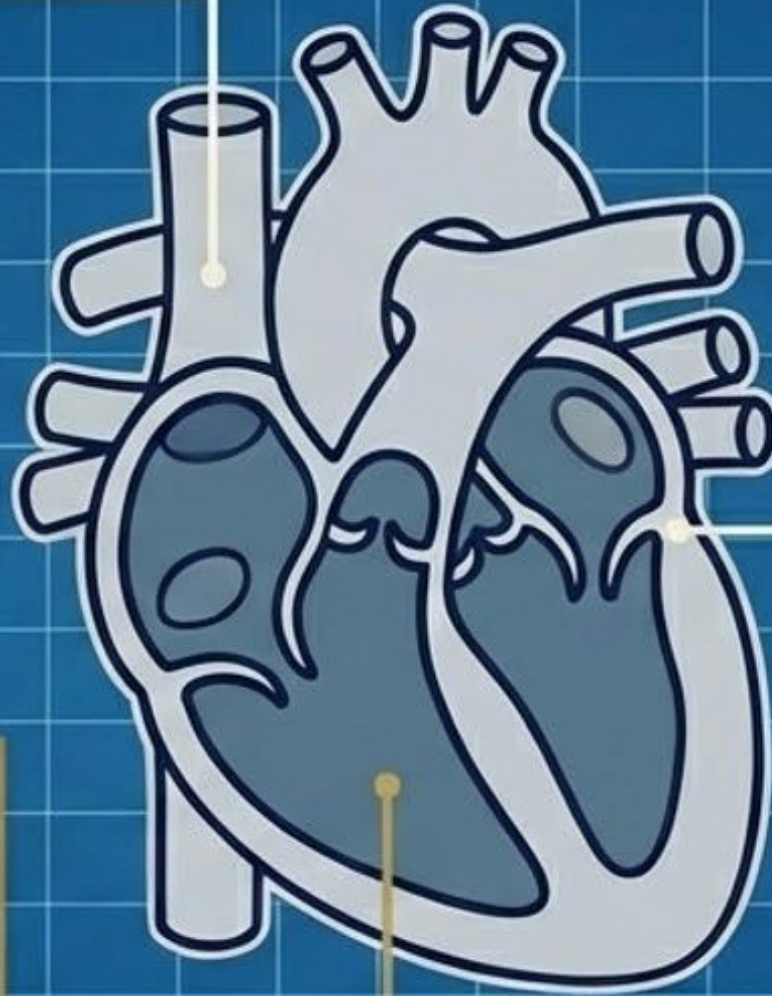
Cardiotoxicity & Systemic Organ Strain

Hemodynamic Instability

Acute use triggers severe hypertension, tachycardia, and vasospasm. This extreme strain directly leads to myocardial ischemia or acute myocardial infarction.

Methamphetamine-Associated Cardiomyopathy

Chronic abuse drives profound, irreversible structural changes: dilation of the ventricles, extensive cardiac fibrosis, and progressive, end-stage heart failure.



Lethal Arrhythmias

Altered catecholamine signaling and massive adrenergic surges disrupt the heart's electrical pathways, frequently leading to lethal ventricular arrhythmias.



Pathophysiology of Renal Failure & Rhabdomyolysis



1. Muscle Necrosis (Rhabdomyolysis)

Extreme hyperthermia, severe agitation, and vasoconstriction lead to rapid skeletal muscle breakdown.

2. Myoglobin Release

Damaged muscle fibers release massive amounts of the protein myoglobin directly into the bloodstream.

3. Renal Obstruction

Myoglobin filters into the kidneys, precipitating and forming obstructive "myoglobin casts" within the renal tubules.

4. Acute Kidney Injury (AKI)

Toxic tubular necrosis and reduced renal blood flow trigger acute renal failure.

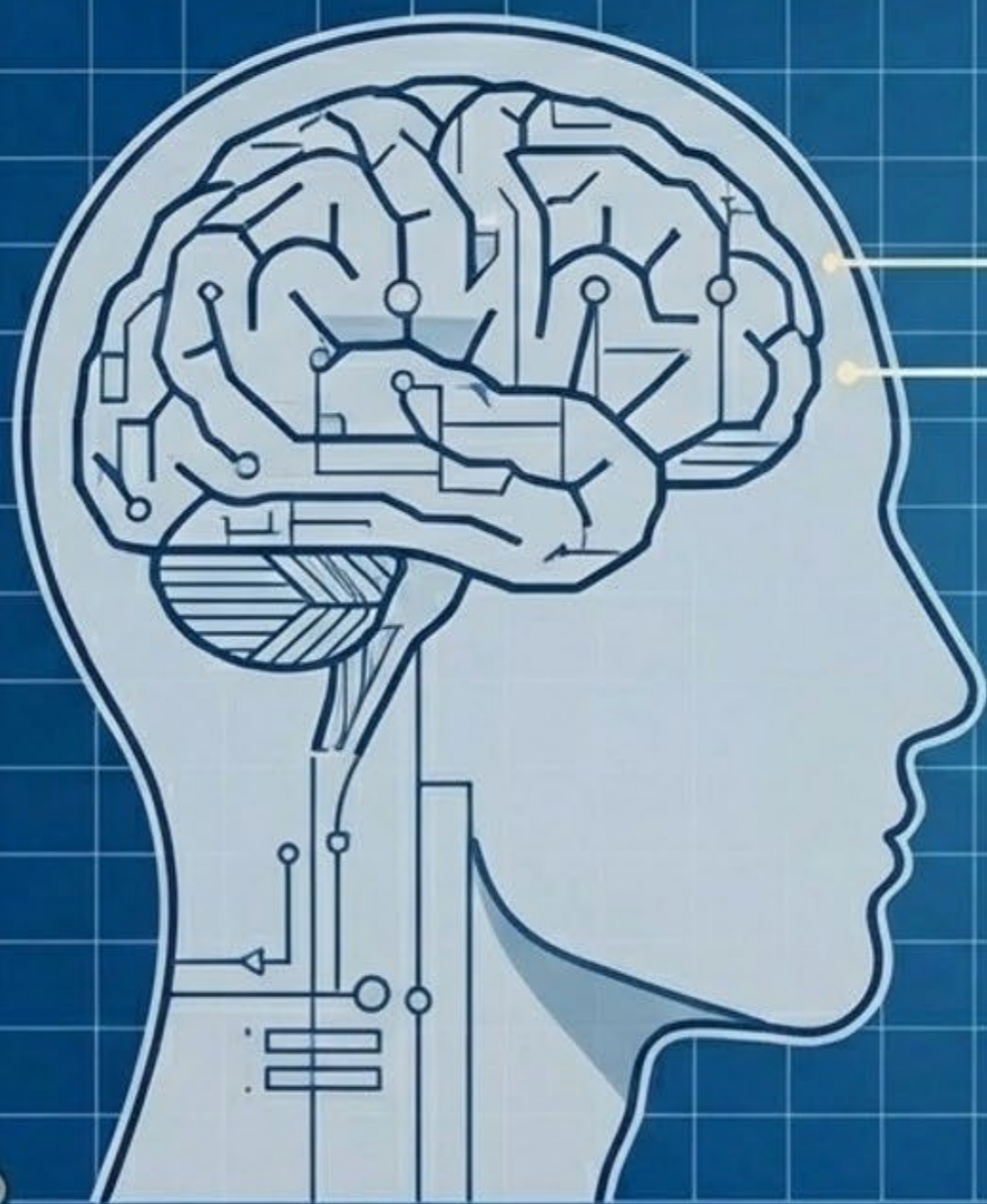
Clinical Diagnostic Markers:

Detection is confirmed via critically elevated serum levels of creatine kinase, urea, cystatin C, and NGAL.



The Psychiatric Paradigm: MIPD

Methamphetamine-Induced Psychosis (MIPD) driven by P2P formulations.



Rapid Onset Paranoia

Extreme, sudden-onset delusions of persecution. Patients exhibit high levels of agitation and suspicion, completely lacking insight into their condition.

Pronounced Hallucinations

Unlike other primary psychoses, MIPD is heavily characterized by visual and tactile hallucinations, such as formication (the severe, distressing sensation of insects crawling under the skin).

Social Disintegration & The Kindling Effect

Results in incoherent speech and intense social isolation. Previous episodes of stimulant-induced psychosis lower the neurological threshold, making future psychotic breaks highly likely even with microscopic doses.

Differential Diagnosis: MIPD vs. Primary Schizophrenia



Symptom Dimension	MIPD (Meth-Induced Psychosis)	Primary Schizophrenia
Positive Symptoms: Hallucinations	Predominantly visual and tactile (e.g., formication).	Predominantly auditory (e.g., voices conversing).
Positive Symptoms: Delusions & Thought	High rates of incoherent speech, intense, rapid paranoia, and acute agitation.	Pronounced, structured thought disorder, thought broadcasting, and thought projection.
Negative Symptoms	Milder negative symptoms; less severe affective flattening.	Pronounced negative symptoms; severe blunted affect, emotional withdrawal, and alogia (poverty of speech).



Clinical Warning: Up to 30% of persistent MIPD cases may transition to a formal schizophrenia diagnosis at long-term follow-up.



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Intervention

The Standard of Care: Behavioral Interventions

The Pharmacological Gap



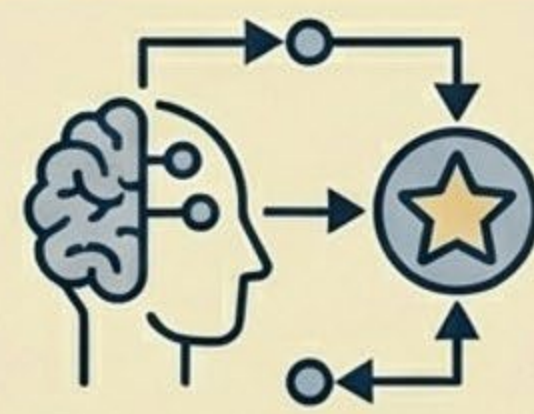
Establish clearly that there are currently zero FDA-approved medications specifically for the treatment of Methamphetamine Use Disorder (MUD). Medicine alone cannot cure this.

The Standard of Care



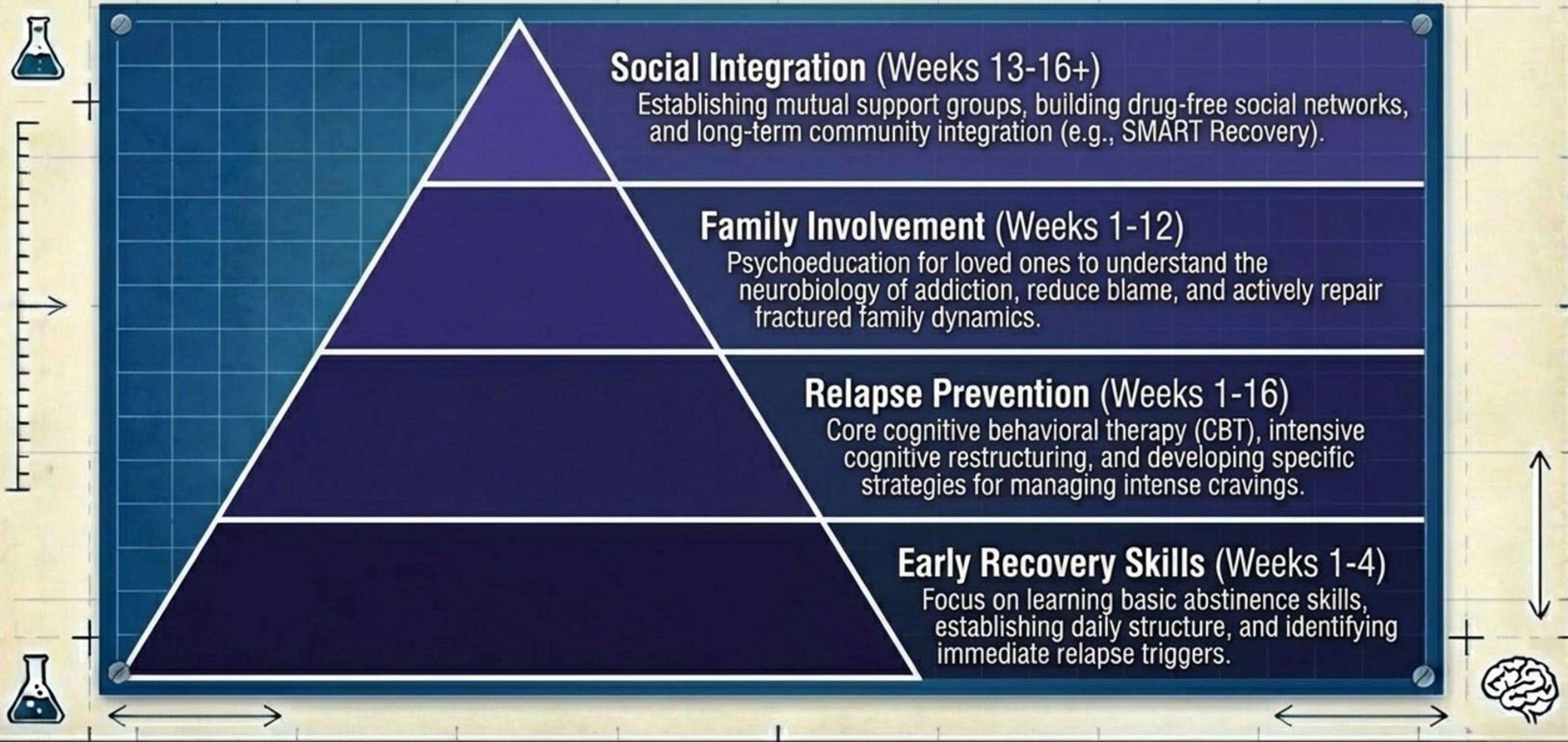
In the absence of pharmacotherapy, highly structured behavioral and psychosocial therapies remain the primary, evidence-based frontline treatment for achieving abstinence.

Contingency Management (CM)



The most effective evidence-based intervention. CM utilizes motivational incentives (tangible rewards) to reinforce objective evidence of abstinence (negative drug tests), directly counteracting the brain's hijacked reward system.

The Matrix Model: A 16-Week Multicomponent Protocol





Clinical Blueprint

Emerging Pharmacotherapy: The NIH ADAPT-2 Trial



Addressing the urgent clinical gap in MUD pharmacotherapy

The Intervention (Combination Therapy)



Injectable Naltrexone

An extended-release opioid antagonist designed to severely modulate the craving and reward pathways in the brain.

Oral Bupropion

An antidepressant that increases extracellular dopamine and norepinephrine levels, effectively mitigating acute withdrawal dysphoria.

The Clinical Outcome



The ADAPT-2 combination demonstrated a statistically significant reduction in methamphetamine use among trial participants, offering the most promising bridge to a pharmacological standard of care to date.

Clinical Complexity: Managing Co-Occurring ADHD

**Stimulant
Use Disorder
(StUD)**

The Clinical Conundrum

Treating severe ADHD in a patient with a history of methamphetamine abuse presents extreme, immediate risks for relapse and medication diversion.

**Severe
ADHD**

Evidence-Based Management Strategy

First-Line Risk Mitigation

Strictly avoid the prescription of short-acting, immediate-release stimulants due to their high abuse liability and rapid euphoric onset.

Pharmacological Options

Utilize long-acting formulations (e.g., Extended-Release Mixed Amphetamine Salts [MAS-ER]) to provide steady therapeutic levels without the reinforcing euphoric 'rush'.

Non-Stimulant Alternatives

Leverage medications like Atomoxetine to effectively treat ADHD symptoms while entirely circumventing the dopaminergic abuse liability.



Clinical Blueprint

The 'Fourth Wave' Synthesis: A Compounded Crisis



Vector 1: The Neurotoxic Baseline

The historical shift to industrial P2P "Super Meth" has created a massive population suffering from profound neurotoxic vulnerability, cardiovascular damage, and volatile psychiatric instability.

The Clinical Imperative

Comprehensive treatment must aggressively integrate evidence-based behavioral therapies (Matrix/CM) with immediate harm reduction. Widespread distribution of Fentanyl Test Strips and Naloxone is mandatory. We must ensure survival to enable recovery.

Vector 2: The Opioid Collision

This vulnerable population is now colliding directly with the "Fourth Wave" of the overdose epidemic—lethal synthetic opioid (fentanyl) contamination directly within the illicit stimulant supply.



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