

**The Prognostic value of trait anger in
treatment of methamphetamine
dependence**

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BA(Psych)(Hons)

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Doctor of Philosophy**

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Statement of Originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library**, being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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Acknowledgement of Authorship and Collaboration

I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis has been done in collaboration with other researchers and contains published papers/ scholarly work of which I am a joint author. My contribution to the joint publications/ scholarly work includes the acquisition of data, analysis and interpretation of data, drafting and revising manuscripts for publication as per listed below.

Publications arising from the clinical trial

Baker, A., Kay-Lambkin, F., Lee, N., Claire, M. & Jenner, L. (2003). *A brief cognitive behavioural intervention for amphetamine users*. Canberra: Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

Baker, A., Lee, N., Claire, M., Lewin, T., Grant, T., Pohlman, S., Saunders, J., Kay-Lambkin, F., Constable, P., Jenner, L., & Carr, V. (2004). Drug use patterns and mental health of regular amphetamine users during a reported 'heroin drought'. *Addiction*, 99(7), 875-884.

Baker, A., Lee, N., Claire, M., Lewin, T., Grant, T., Pohlman, S., Saunders, J., Kay-Lambkin, F., Constable, P., Jenner, L., & Carr, V. (2005). Brief cognitive behavioural interventions for regular amphetamine users: a step in the right direction. *Addiction* 100(3), 367-378.

These publications are presented separately as Appendices.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my beautiful son Jack.

This thesis traversed several unexpected pathways that inevitably made the journey longer than expected and at times quite arduous. However, at a critical point in this journey my son, in utero, and I survived and that is truly a miracle.

“Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step”. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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Abstract

Methamphetamine is a potent stimulant with high abuse potential and is the second most widely used illicit drug in the world, after cannabis. The prevalence of methamphetamine use in Australia is among the highest in the world with an estimated 1.1 million people (6% of those aged 14 years and over) reporting lifetime use. Nearly all users of methamphetamine experience withdrawal and aggression is a common sequela. Methamphetamine use is a risk factor for a wide range of negative consequences including physical, neurological and psychiatric illness, property crime and violence. The relationship between methamphetamine use, anger and violence is complex and moderated by a range of individual, social and environmental factors. Treatment for methamphetamine use may be hindered by a propensity for anger in patients. This study utilises data from a randomised controlled trial of cognitive behaviour therapy for methamphetamine users to: (1) assess the reliability and validity of a measure of anger (the STAXI-2) in an Australian clinical sample of methamphetamine users; and (2) test the hypothesis that trait anger is prognostic of methamphetamine treatment outcome. A high level of internal consistency and factor analysis established the reliability and validity of the scale in this population group. A series of multivariate statistical models was developed to test whether trait anger upon entry to treatment is prognostic of treatment outcome. Contrary to the hypothesis, patients high in trait anger at baseline did no worse in treatment than patients with low trait anger; that is, trait anger did not modify the effect of treatment. These findings show that the STAXI-2 is a valid measure of anger in this population group and that high levels of trait anger should not be considered a barrier to the delivery of effective treatment to patients with methamphetamine use disorders.