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**Leadership Development  
Initiative (LDI) Curriculum**

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**What's in a Word:**

**The world's fifth vital sign:**

**PAIN**

**What's in a Word: The world's fifth vital sign: PAIN**

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## Overview

This presentation addresses the need for physician advocacy to achieve equitable global access to opioids. Having the skills and background knowledge to do advocacy well, is a key leadership competency. 4/5 of the world's population suffers from pain because they do not have access to medical opioids.

International law and treaties regarding the use and control of opioids is complex and at times, contradictory. Legitimate use of opioids is regulated under the same international law that governs illicit use of these same drugs, with the resulting challenge that there is significantly more funding for global drug control than funding for opioids for medical research and pain management.

There is a "world drug problem", but Palliative advocates have a different sense and reality about what that problem is. Learning some of the intricate complexities of the International Treaties and Conventions facilitates advanced leadership in the halls of academics, law and government.

## Objectives

After this presentation, participants will:

1. Understand relationships between the various drug control agencies that impact opioid availability.
2. Know the challenging aspects of the language in international law which makes access to opioids more difficult.
3. Discuss the "3 Pillars" of the Political Declaration on Drug Policy: demand reduction, supply reduction and the need to combat money laundering and its impact for palliative care.

## Important Teaching Points

- INCB: International Narcotics Control Board is the independent and quasi-judicial control organ for the implementation of the UN drug conventions. It reports to CND and plays a key role monitoring enforcement of restrictions on narcotics and in deciding what should be regulated.
- UNODC: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime: bureaucracy.
- CND: Commission on Narcotic Drugs (governs UNOCD) and represents nations.
- CNV: Convention on Narcotic Drugs.
- The international focus on access to drugs began at the beginning of the twentieth century, but change is so hard because since its inception, the entire focus has been on control.

- INCB has a dual obligation in one sentence: to ensure adequate access for medical use while at the same time managing control.
- Language shapes us, and if we keep using words like evil, addiction, slavery, that creates another barrier.
- In 143 paragraphs of the 2009 Political Declaration on Drug Policy there is only one line mentioning narcotic medicines for pain relief. Efforts are underway to get good language in place before 2016.
- There is no compulsion in international law supporting meaningful access to opioids because international law does not use the word "shall". More often, words like "may" or "advised to" is utilized. International law only uses "shall" in terms of treating drugs as illicit products.
- All NGOs that work on drug policy (prevention, treatment, policy) are positioning themselves to advise individual states.
- Please refer to the audio PowerPoint on IPCRC.net for further details.

### **Resources / References**

Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation Towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem, High-level segment, Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Vienna, March 11-12, 2009: <https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CND-Uploads/CND-52-RelatedFiles/V0984963-English.pdf>