

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

PHYSICIAN ADVOCACY FOR EQUITABLE
ACCESS TO OPIOIDS
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POLICY OF THE FIFTH VITAL SIGN

Four fifths of the world is in pain because physicians in so many countries cannot access medical opioids





The culprit? TWO NARRATIVES

International law: the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs

- High funding for global drug “control” rather than provision
- Minimal funding for opioid provision (NGOs)
- Language of “evil” and “addiction” applied to drugs, consumers, traffickers
- “Fear of addiction” the main known barrier

States Parties themselves

- *They* fail to remove barriers
- Too many/outdated regulations
- Not enough trained health providers
- Inadequate health infrastructure
- Weak civil society
- Lack of institutional will



Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961

- **Central aim** to ensure provision of licitly cultivated, manufactured, traded, opioids
- Whose responsibility under international law to “secure adequate provision”?
 - INCB (mathematical function of balancing supply and demand)
 - Supply determined by aggregated demand
 - Estimates system.
 - No requirement of accurate assessment of *need* – Requires infrastructure and education of providers – **RESOURCES** --
 - “Parties shall supply estimates” – THAT IS ALL – NOW THERE ARE “INCB GUIDELINES”



CND and UNODC institutional priorities

- CND – Commission on Narcotic Drugs (governs UNODC) – represents nations
- UNODC – United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime – bureaucracy
- CND “THREE PILLARS” BASED ON 2009 Political Declaration to solve the “world drug problem”
- Demand Reduction
- Supply Reduction
- Combating Money Laundering
- *We need to increase supply and increase demand for medical opioids!*



7 UNODC FUNDING AND PRIORITY AREAS

- Countering transnational organized crime and illicit trafficking, including drug trafficking
- Countering Corruption
- Terrorism prevention and combating
- Justice
- Health and Livelihoods (combating drugs and HIV)
- Research and trends analysis
- Policy Support

No subprogram or institutional commitment, staff, funding for EM: “central treaty obligation” What Happened??



HEALTH AND LIVELIHOODS

- “This Thematic Programme is based on **the basic principle** of all international conventions on action **against** narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and transnational organized crime”
- **BASIC PRINCIPLE IS ACTION AGAINST, NOT PROVISION**
- “to prevent the flows and ***protect the health of individuals and societies from the dangerous effects of drugs***, to address the health and social problems of drug users, drug dependent individuals and people living in prison settings, and to protect the populations vulnerable to HIV, human trafficking, organized crime and violence.



CND ACTION STEP: CALLS FOR CHANGE!!

- Refocus delegates on the conventions' central objective: to ensure adequate provision of drugs for medical purposes
- Make provision of opioids for palliative care a UNODC sub-programme with dedicated staff and resources

