

## Background information

First of all, it is essential to define what an opioid is and what is meant by the misuse of an opioid. Opioids, sometimes called narcotics, are a type of drug. They include strong prescription pain relievers, such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, fentanyl, and tramadol. The illegal drug heroin is also an opioid. Some opioids are produced from the opium plant, and others are synthetic (human-made). One massive opioid that is used in day to day life is morphine, which is the most potent painkiller that is legally allowed to be prescribed to patients in the hospital or any form of pain treatment outside the hospital. The idea of a prescription is fundamental, as that is a factor that is used to differentiate between legal and nonlegal drugs.

Therefore, A doctor may give you a prescription opioid to reduce pain after you have had a significant injury or surgery. You may get them if you have severe pain from health conditions like cancer. Some doctors prescribe them for chronic pain. Opioids can cause side effects such as drowsiness, mental fog, nausea, and constipation. They may also cause slowed breathing, which can lead to overdose deaths. Therefore, the intake of opioids is considerable risk due to its given consequences.

There is a massive number of side effects that are present when an opioid overdose occurs such as, the affected person will start vomiting and start making gurgling noises, or they cannot be awakened (woken up)/are unable to speak. These are only a few of the consequences (with death being the most serious one). The biggest issue of taking opioids is the idea of dependence, as it means that the person is feeling withdrawal symptoms when they are not taking the drug.

Addiction is a chronic brain disease that causes a person to seek out drugs, even though they cause harm. The risks of dependence and addiction are higher if you misuse the medicines. Misuse can include taking too much medicine, taking someone else's medicine, taking it in a different way than you are supposed to, or taking medicine to get high.

The illegal use of an opioid is seen as a crime/punishment in many countries. Therefore, it is essential for a delegate to consider what their countries' views are towards this topic. Over the years, many countries have adopted the idea of using rehabilitation or treatment to solve this issue. Many countries have also attempted to help addicts in the form of providing addicted users with clean needles and specific areas where they can inject themselves. However, they are obviously using the illegal form of the drug. Therefore, the delegate needs to remember that this committee only focuses on the abuse of prescribed opioids.

There are multiple ways in which a patient/civilian can abuse this drug, and one option is for the patient to lie about their pain after an injury to continue getting the drug so that they can receive the desired "high effect." Another form of abusing the drug (which is more common) is the idea of selling the prescribed medicine to users

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who have no reason to have them in the first place. The second factor is the most common as a high number of people carry out this action with the intention to receive money/profit, or any other goods. The pharmaceutical business is a vast industry that highly benefits from this as they aim to make a profit, so this also has to be taken into consideration. The biggest factor which is caused by this issue is the idea of a higher crime rate in the country/world, as this affects everybody in any way shape or form.

## **UN involvement**

The committee responsible for dealing with this issue is the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). They are continually trying to find solutions to this horrific problem. The UN has formed the *World Drug Report 2019*, and it is aimed at "improving the understanding of the world drug problem and contributing towards fostering greater international cooperation for countering its impact on health, governance, and security."

They have created five booklets (which for a delegate is quite a lot, as the topics in these booklets are quite broad because they focus on each drug). It is highly suggested that a delegate reads parts of booklets 1,2, and 3 as they are the most applicable to the topic, which will be discussed in the committee.

The UN Chief António Guterres denounced the devastation that the drug crisis poses to the "health and well-being of families and communities, as well as on the security and sustainable development of nations." The UN committee also states that "one in seven people with drug disorders is receiving adequate care, while effective treatments to the crisis are not widely available in many countries."

The United Nations estimates up to 585,000 people died as a result of drug use in 2017, with the use of highly-addictive substances continuing to grow around the world, and that Globally, the number of drug users has increased to an estimated 271 million people, the report said, up 30% in just ten years. Most importantly the UN had created a web-based platform with a wide range of electronic resources that offer innovative and practical tools on how to approach challenges, related to synthetic drugs and particularly opioids, called the United Nations (UN) Toolkit on Synthetic Drugs (more research on this can be done via the sources listed at the end).

## **Questions to consider**

- What is more important for your country, punishment, or rehabilitation?
- Are there any effective of methods of regulating the prescription of these opioids?
- Who is to blame for the issue, and how can they be found, and held responsible for their actions?

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- Are the addicts who have to be blamed for their addiction, or is it the government's fault for not regulating this drug earlier/more effectively?
- If punishment is the solution, then who should be punished the doctor prescribing the drug, or the person who re-sells the drug, or the consumer/buyer (addict)?
- What should be done to the pharmaceutical company that produces/synthesis of the drug?
- Should the prescription of opioids be banned entirely, and what are the consequences of following through this plan?
- Are there any developing countries that are heavily impacted by this issue but cannot solve it due to their economic position, and how other countries can assist them?
- Should there be an international policy, or should each country have an internal policy towards the use of non-prescribed opioids?
- How to prevent large organizations such as gangs/cartels from re-selling these prescribed opioids?

## Sources

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