

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Topic 1: Global Opioid Crisis

One of the five areas that the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime oversees is “drug abuse prevention and health.”¹ Specifically, “Through educational campaigns and by basing its approach on scientific findings, UNODC tries to convince youth not to use illicit drugs, drug-dependent people to seek treatment and Governments to see drug use as a health problem, not a crime.”²

With that in mind, UNODC is tasked with responding to one of the most dire global crises today: the opioid epidemic. To give a brief overview, opioids are drugs that can be used as painkillers or anesthetics and are therefore often prescribed by doctors. However, misuse of opioids has become a rising issue, as opioid overdoses became the leading cause of drug-related deaths worldwide in 2010.³ In addition, a study done in 2015 found that 70% of all drug-related health disorders were related to opioid use.⁴ For this issue, we will define opioids as both opiates found in nature as well as synthetic drugs that mimic these drugs, and are often many times more potent.⁵

While opioid use is certainly the most prevalent in North America, countries across the world are currently grappling with what is a global opioid crisis.⁶ Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to elicit a unified response to combat the growing epidemic.

¹ <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/about-unodc/index.html?ref=menutop>

² *ibid*

³ <http://www.unodc.org/docs/treatment/overdose.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/press/releases/2017/June/world-drug-report-2017-29-5-million-people-globally-suffer-from-drug-use-disorders--opioids-the-most-harmful.html>

⁵ https://www.unodc.org/documents/scientific/Terminology_and_Information_on_Drugs-3rd_edition.pdf

⁶ <https://www.unodc.org/wdr2017/en/interactive-map.html>

While doing your research, I encourage you to consider our mission's three specific parts:

- 1) "To convince youth not to use illicit drugs"
 - What is the most effective way to do this for the opioid crisis? Is this merely an education campaign? Or are more drastic measures needed? Is this only possible once illegal drug trafficking is addressed?
- 2) "[To convince] drug-dependent people to seek treatment"
 - What treatments are we encouraging drug-dependent individuals to seek? (It might be worth reading a little bit about Substitution Maintenance Treatment.⁷)
 - What is the best way to convince drug-dependent individuals to seek these treatments?
- 3) "[To convince] Governments to see drug use as a health problem, not a crime"
 - How should countries treat individuals struggling with drug addictions, and specifically opioid addictions? What is the best attitude to take towards these individuals?
 - Is criminalizing drugs the right way to combat them in the first place?
 - Legalizing certain drugs could lead to more responsible usage and handling etc.

Please remember when doing your research that you are representing your country, and not your own personal views. That means you should be researching how your country is currently responding to the opioid crisis, or other drug issues. How does your country deter individuals from abusing opioids? What treatments are currently available in your country? What is your country's attitude towards those who are addicted to opioids? (Does your country treat drug abuse as a health issue or a criminal issue?)

If you have any questions at all, please feel free to email me at Karen.neugroschl@mail.yu.edu.

I look forward to reading your position papers!

⁷ http://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/14107/1/WHO_PositionPaper_Substitution.pdf

Good luck,

Keren Neugroschl

Chair, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

YUNMUN XXVIII