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An Analysis of Drug Legalization US

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ABSTRACT

7 million individuals are addicted to illegal drugs, and one out of every four people dies as a result of their use. With 25.8 million people aged 12 and up consuming marijuana, it is the most extensively used illicit substance. More deaths, illnesses, and impairments are linked to drug usage than any other preventable health condition. Instead of boosting the drug supply, the War on Drugs should focus on diminishing it. To combat drug manufacture and trafficking from other countries, the government must scale up its efforts.

In order to remove the cultivation, manufacture, distribution, and trafficking of illegal substances, nations must increase their cooperation. Many jurisdictions may become complacent in their hunt for alternative initiatives that actually work, secure in their illusory evidence basis. Requiring that publicly funded programs be evaluated and show improved outcomes would reduce the number of promising or evidence-based programs by more than 75%. In High Point, North Carolina, police and prosecutors developed a focused-deterrence strategy. An emphasis on specific drug markets where flagrant dealing leads to violence is an alternative.

There is no reason to believe that routine drug-law enforcement may reduce violence. Increased enforcement pressure may make violence more beneficial to those most eager to use it. Focused deterrence is one strategy for achieving this goal. A Ceasefire-style campaign could help to tip the market toward a less violent market.

U.S. drug-law enforcement could put the target group out of business by focusing attention on them. With the emphasis on might, the consequence might be a significant reduction in bloodshed. Drugs with higher risks of damage might only be offered for sale on licensed premises. Broadening the current research agenda could result in more intriguing science and more effective policies.

I. INTRODUCTION

Drugs are compounds that have an impact on the body and the mind. Drugs can have a wide range of impacts. Some medication side effects include long-term and irreversible health repercussions. They can even persist after a person has stopped using the drug.

Drugs can be taken in a variety of methods, including injection, inhalation, and ingestion. The

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way a medicine is given can have an impact on its effects on the body. Injecting medications directly into the bloodstream, for example, has an instant effect, whereas eating has a delayed effect. However, all medicines that are overused have an effect on the brain. They flood the brain with massive levels of dopamine, a chemical that helps govern our emotions, motivation, and pleasure. They cause a "high" by flooding the brain with massive levels of dopamine, a neurotransmitter that helps control our emotions, motivation, and sensations of pleasure. Drugs can alter the way the brain functions and impair a person's capacity to make decisions, leading to extreme cravings and compulsive drug usage. This behavior can develop into a substance dependency, or drug addiction, over time.²

Today, more than 7 million people suffer from an illegal drug addiction, and illicit drug usage is responsible for one out of every four deaths. Drug misuse is linked to more deaths, illnesses, and impairments than any other preventable health problem. People who are addicted to drugs or alcohol are at a higher risk of unintended injuries, accidents, and domestic violence.

Drug trafficking and abuse touch practically every part of our lives in the United States. The financial cost alone is staggering, at approximately \$215 billion. The consequences of drug usage and addiction include a stretched criminal system, lost productivity, and environmental harm.³

II. DEMAND FOR ILLEGAL DRUGS IS HIGH

According to the NSDUH, 14.2 percent of people aged 12 and up had used illegal drugs. Marijuana is the most widely used illicit drug, with 25.8 million people aged 12 and up using it. Psychotherapeutics came in second, with 15.2 million people reporting "nonmedical use," down from 16.3 million the year before. Approximately 5.3 million people aged 12 and above said they had used cocaine in the previous year, 850,000 said they had used methamphetamine, and 453,000 said they had used heroin.

The prevalence of drug use varies by age. Young adults aged 18 to 25 have the greatest rates of illegal drug use, with 33.5 percent reporting use in the last year. Nineteen percent of 12- to 17-year-olds admit to using illicit drugs in the previous year. Finally, 10.3 percent of persons aged 26 and up say they used illicit drugs in the previous year.

² *The physical & mental effects of drug abuse: Gateway Foundation*. Gateway. (2021, December 3). Retrieved March 27, 2022, from <https://www.gatewayfoundation.org/faqs/effects-of-drug-abuse/>

³ *Impact of Drugs on Society*. (U) impact of drugs on society - national drug threat assessment 2010 (unclassified). (n.d.). Retrieved March 27, 2022, from https://www.justice.gov/archive/ndic/pubs38/38661/drugImp_act.htm

III. IS PROHIBITION AN EFFECTIVE DRUG-CONTROL STRATEGY IN THE UNITED STATES?

Yes, prohibition is an effective drug-control strategy. The War on Drugs Requires Prohibition. Leaders must condemn drugs and implement laws against their sale and usage in order to effectively combat drug abuse. The government must halt the flow of narcotics into the country and prohibit drug sales within its boundaries. The most effective strategy to combat drug usage is to enforce drug laws. According to statistics, drug use decreases during periods of strong enforcement. The War on Drugs should concentrate on reducing the drug supply, not increasing it. Critics argue that the war on drugs has failed and that legalization would be a more successful drug control method. A true war on drugs, on the other hand, is not being waged. The government must step up its efforts to limit drug production and trafficking from other countries. Nations must expand their collaboration in the attempt to eradicate the cultivation, manufacture, distribution, and trafficking of illegal substances throughout the region, which requires an international drug prohibition campaign.

No, prohibition is not an effective drug-control strategy. Prohibition of drugs is ineffective. Prohibition of marijuana, cocaine, heroin, and other narcotics has cost the United States billions of dollars while failing to curb drug use considerably. Drug prohibition is, in reality, directly responsible for widespread crime, societal chaos, and family disintegration.

IV. INITIATIVES

Many county, state, and federal initiatives are aimed at criminal offenders who use drugs. Despite this, the majority of people do little to reduce drug usage or criminality. The drug court system is an exception; some implementations of this concept have been found to reduce drug usage and associated unlawful conduct. Unfortunately, drug courts' resource requirements limit their potential extent. The necessity that each participant come before a judge for a status hearing on a regular basis.

Hawaii's Opportunity Probation with Enforcement (HOPE)

The HOPE technique to implementing probation and parole terms, called after Hawaii's Opportunity Probation with Enforcement, has the potential to reduce drug-related offender use on a larger scale. HOPE, like drug courts, imposes strict penalties for probation violators, including drug use. HOPE begins with a formal warning that any breach of probation terms would result in an immediate, albeit temporary, jail stay. Probationers are subsequently subjected to regular random drug testing, which begins at six times a month and gradually

decreases with continued compliance. A positive drug test results in an arrest and a brief term in jail (usually a few days but in some jurisdictions as little as a few hours in a holding cell). Probationers only appear in front of the judge if they have broken a rule; nevertheless, a drug court judge is present at every status review. As a result, HOPE sites can oversee huge groups of offenders; in Hawaii, a single judge now supervises over 2,000 HOPE probationers. Hawaii's HOPE program surpassed regular probation in lowering drug use, new offences, and incarceration among a group of primarily methamphetamine-using felony probationers in a major randomized controlled trial (RCT).

The first discipline in Hawaii's HOPE program is usually two days in jail. Repeated violations result in harsher penalties, with the 15% or so of those who transgress a fourth time facing a decision between residential treatment and incarceration. No one is forced to get treatment unless they have already failed. The results indicate that this is a good design.

Recommendations

Many organizations advocate for the implementation of evidence-based preventative and treatment programs. However, there is one major drawback to the drive toward evidence-based practices: the quality of the evidence base. It's critical to consider what constitutes evidence and who has the authority to present it. On the basis of shaky evidence, many initiatives are enlarged and repeated. The way you conduct your research is important. The effect size of offender programs is adversely associated to research quality, according to a review by George Mason University criminologist David Weisburd and colleagues: the more rigorous the study, the smaller the stated effects.

Dennis Gorman, an epidemiologist at Texas A&M University, discovered that evaluations written by program developers have substantially bigger impact sizes than those written by independent researchers. Yet, according to Benjamin Wright and colleagues, the program developer serves as an evaluator in more than half of the substance-abuse programs aimed at criminal justice that have been designated as evidence-based by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP). Many jurisdictions may become complacent in their hunt for alternative initiatives that actually work, secure in their illusory evidence basis.

We must improve our ability to identify effective solutions and assist practitioners in sorting through the evidence. Requiring that publicly funded programs be evaluated and show improved outcomes using strong research designs—experimental designs where possible, well-designed historical control strategies where experiments aren't possible, and "intent-to-treat"

analyses rather than cherry-picking success by studying only program completers—would reduce the number of promising or evidence-based programs by more than 75%. This would not only relieve taxpayers of the expense of funding unsuccessful programs, but it would also assist researchers in identifying more viable areas for future intervention study.

When investigating drug-affected people, there is a significant risk of selection bias, which makes experimental designs considerably more valuable. The need of keeping things small is crucial. It saves money and, more importantly, it keeps champions with shattered egos off the field. It's difficult to cut back on a program once an organisation has invested in it. Small pilot assessments that provide positive results can then be duplicated and enlarged if the replications produce comparable results.

A third approach takes into account the diversity of violence among drug traffickers. Police can reduce general violence levels by focusing enforcement on those recognised as the most violent. This creates both Darwinian and incentive pressures. This method has yet to be thoroughly assessed. If a jurisdiction wants to try out such a strategy, this appears to be an appealing research opportunity.

Illustration

The Boston firearms initiative Ceasefire, which focused on reducing adolescent killings in the mid-1990s, was a pioneering effort. Recognizing that many of the homicides were the result of fights between juvenile gangs, the strategy centered on warning members of each gang that if anyone in the gang shot someone, police and prosecutors would use every legal tool at their disposal to prosecute the entire gang, regardless of who pulled the trigger. Instead of gaining acclaim from coworkers for boosting the organization's prestige, the potential shooter now had to contend with the fact that killing put the entire group in jeopardy. As a result, the gang's social influence was engaged on the side of violence reduction. The effects were dramatic: killings by youth guns in Boston dropped from two a month before the intervention to zero over the intervention's duration. Ceasefire has been implemented in various forms across the country, with some impressive achievements.

An emphasis on specific drug markets where flagrant dealing leads to violence and disruption is an alternative to the Ceasefire group-focused method. In High Point, North Carolina, police and prosecutors developed a focused-deterrence strategy that included close collaboration with community people. . The Drug Market Intervention methodology entailed identifying all of the dealers in the targeted market, making undercover purchases from them (sometimes on film), arresting the most violent dealers while not arresting the others. Instead, they were invited to a

community gathering where they were promised that, despite the fact that charges had been filed against them, they would be given another chance if they quit dealing. According to David Kennedy, the neighborhood's notorious drug market vanished overnight and hasn't been seen for the past seven years. The initiative has been copied in dozens of jurisdictions, and the evidence basis for its effectiveness is rising.

Aftereffects

Drug traffickers are notoriously violent. Some employ violence to settle territorial or transactional issues, while others use it to advance up the corporate ladder or intimidate witnesses or law enforcement officers. Because many traffickers have guns or have easy access to them, they occasionally use them to resolve disputes that are unrelated to narcotics. There is no reason to believe that routine drug-law enforcement may reduce violence because the market tends to replace drug traffickers who are arrested; in fact, the converse may be true if increased enforcement pressure makes violence more beneficial to those most eager to use it.

V. STRATEGIES

This raises the question of whether drug enforcement policies can be tailored to prevent violence. Focused deterrence, sometimes known as pulling-levers policing, is one strategy for achieving this goal. These strategies entail law enforcement officers directly communicating a credible threat to violent individuals or groups, with the goal of lowering violence even if drug trafficking or gang activity remains the same. Such interventions try to shift situations from high-violence to low-violence equilibrium by altering the actual and perceived likelihood of punishment, such as making violent drug dealing riskier in terms of enforcement than less violent drug dealing.

Dealing with drug-related violence in Mexico, which now claims over 1,000 lives each month, is a particularly difficult subject. It's worth thinking about if a Ceasefire-style campaign could help to tip the market toward a less violent market. A scheme like this might take advantage of two aspects of the current situation: Mexican drug cartels make the majority of their money selling drugs to be distributed in the United States, and the United States has far more drug enforcement power than Mexico. If the Mexican government chose one of the major organizations to destroy after a transparent process based on relative levels of violence, U.S. drug-law enforcement could put the target group out of business by focusing attention on the U.S. distributors who buy their drugs from the target Mexican organization, putting pressure on them to find an alternative source. If this were to happen, the target organization's product would be without a market.

If one organization could be destroyed in this manner, the surviving organizations might respond to news that a second selection process was underway by reducing their violence levels in a competitive manner, each hoping that one of their rivals would be chosen as the second target. With the emphasis on might, the consequence might be a significant reduction in bloodshed.

Whatever the technical intricacies of drug-law enforcement that reduces violence, the principle behind it is that in established markets, enforcement pressure can have a greater impact on how drugs are sold than on how much is sold. As a result, minimizing violence may be more possible than drastically reducing drug trafficking in general.

VI. CONCLUSION

Drug legalization necessitates a return to the pre-World War II era, when practically all narcotics were lawful. This would necessitate lifting the government's prohibition on the distribution, sale, and personal use of some currently prohibited medications. The proposed ideas range from full legalization, which would totally remove all kinds of government control, to various forms of managed legalization, in which drugs would be legally available but under government control, such as through the use of a prescription medication program.

- Mandatory dosage and medical warning labels
- Advertising restrictions,
- Limitations on the number of items that can be purchased at one time,
- Age restrictions and the maximum amount that can be purchased at one time
- Requirements for the delivery of certain medications in a specific form,
- The sale of alcohol to inebriated people is prohibited.
- Special user licenses are required to purchase specific medications.
- A possible clinical setting for intravenous drug intake and/or supervised usage.

While some drugs would be sold over the counter in pharmacies or other licensed places under the regulated legalization system, drugs with higher risks of damage might only be offered for sale on licensed premises where usage could be monitored and emergency medical assistance made available. Caffeine, nicotine, and ethyl alcohol are examples of drugs having varying levels of restricted distribution in most nations.

The correct role of science in policymaking is limited since drug policy involves contentious concerns of value as well as fact. And many of the factual queries are too difficult to answer with existing technology: In criminal marketplaces, for example, the methods for determining

price and quantity have largely remained uninvestigated. Drug misuse research, on the other hand, can provide light on a range of scientifically intriguing problems regarding the nature of human motivation and self-regulation, as well as group dynamics and tipping events, which are confounded by faulty information, intoxication, and impairment, not every study needs to be justified in terms of how it can help policymakers make better decisions. Good theory, on the other hand, is frequently generated in response to practical issues, and policymakers want scientific direction. Broadening the current research agenda beyond biomedical investigations and evaluations of the current policy repertory could result in more intriguing science and more effective policies.
