

“Under Control?”

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**Assessing serious evil: bioethical considerations of drug control**

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**Abstract** (222 words)

Concerned with the health and welfare of mankind, the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs aims to prevent and combat the „serious evil” constituted by addiction and abuse. However, besides a sole reference to the religious concept of profound immorality, this international treaty has never been further justified by secular ethics based on logic, reason, or moral intuition. Despite addiction and abuse being behavioural patterns, countermeasures fail to address these problems at the level of human psychosocial interactions. Instead, legislations exert control merely at the level of material interaction (e.g., possession and consumption), and with only a biasedly selected subset of psychoactive substances. Furthermore, it is also ethically questionable that current drug control policies ignore all other outcomes, forms, and functions of drug use apart from the assumed dipoles of current medical use, and non-medical “abuse”. Recently, more ethical concerns have been raised by the rapid emergence of a large number of novel psychoactive substances (NPS), as these drugs are becoming increasingly controlled by “analogue laws” on the basis of their molecular similarity to other substances, or due to unknown long-term effects. Our presentation discusses several bioethical considerations of drug control, such as the ethics of risk assessment and substance scheduling, the legitimacy of self-medication and self-enhancement, the ethical basis for using the precautionary principle, and the feasibility of evidence-based drug policies.

**Brief biographies**

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