WHO activities for addressing public health dimensions of the world drug problem

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World Health Organization is...

- UN specialized agency for health (1948) - the directing and coordinating authority on international health work
- 194 countries (Ministries of Health) collectively decide together with WHO Secretariat on global health priorities and action to save lives and improve health
- Headquarters in Geneva, 6 regional offices, 151 country offices
- Secretariat is staffed by some 7500 health and other experts and support staff
- Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus
WHO's main functions

- **Technical support** to countries that do not have sufficient capacity of their own
- **Norms and standards development** on health issues
- Monitor and assess **global health trends** hand-in-hand with other agencies
- Strengthening **health systems**
- Research agenda and knowledge management
- Promote **health security**: addressing common threats and vulnerability
In 2015, the world agreed to a bold set of Sustainable Development Goals.

The World Health Organization has a catalytic impact on these Goals.

In its General Programme of Work 2019-2023, WHO pledged to monitor the world’s progress – and the Secretariat’s own contribution – towards three ambitious SDG-based goals.

1 billion HEALTHY LIVES

1 billion more people with UHC

1 billion SAFER LIVES

“Health is a human right. No one should get sick or die just because they are poor, or because they cannot access the services they need.” – Dr Tedros
Strategic and operational shifts in WHO's work

- Focus on the country impact and increased efficiency to achieve 3 billion targets in line with the SDG 2030 Agenda and the Outcome document of UNGASS 2016

- Addressing the world drug problem in the context of WHO Strategic Priorities:
  - Universal Health Coverage for people with drug use disorders and those who use drugs – "leaving no one behind"
    - Provision of essential treatment and harm reduction services (drug use disorders and mental health; HIV and hepatitis, NCDs, Tuberculosis, STIs ...), with reduced number of people suffering financial hardships
    - Access to controlled medicines within the UHC framework
  - Promoting healthier populations
    - Accelerating action on prevention of Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs) and Mental Health
      - WHO Flagship program on mental health ("mental health conditions" include SUD)
    - Accelerating elimination and eradication of high impact communicable diseases (HIV, Hep, TB, STIs..)
Recent and future relevant health-related high-level events

- Third High-level Meeting of the UN General Assembly on the prevention and control of Noncommunicable Diseases (NCD), New York, 27 September 2018
  - Political Declaration
  - Side events:
    - Improving availability of internationally controlled drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes. Co-sponsored by Belgium, Australia, UNODC, INCB, WHO
    - UN Interagency Task Force on NCDs
      - UNODC is a member of the UN TF

- UN General Assembly High-level Meeting on ending Tuberculosis (TB), NY, 26 September 2018
  - Political Declaration

- The Global Conference on Primary Health Care, Astana, Kazakhstan, 25-26 October 2018
  - Co-hosted by WHO, UNICEF, Kazakhstan
  - Declaration of Astana

- High-level Meeting of the UN General Assembly on Universal Health Coverage (UHC), 2019
WHO activities on psychoactive substances and related issues

- Treaty/convention-based function of the WHO Expert Committee on Drug Dependence (ECDD)
  - Meetings held annually, twice in 2018
  - Robust evidence based prioritization of psychoactive substances to be reviewed by ECDD, with support of UNODC, INCB, Regional institutions & Member States

- WHO activities are not limited to controlled psychoactive drugs, but include other psychoactive substances such as alcohol and nicotine/tobacco

- Focus on public health and health systems and services

- Implemented by a range of specialized technical programs
  - Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Essential Medicines and Health Products, HIV and Hepatitis, Violence and Injury Prevention...
Deaths attributable to psychoactive substance use worldwide

- 450,000 deaths attributable to psychoactive drug use (estimates for 2015; WHO, 2017)
  - 168,000 from drug use disorders (overdoses included)
  - HIV, hepatitis, road traffic accidents, suicides

- 7 million deaths attributable to tobacco smoking (WHO, 2018)

- 3 million deaths attributable to alcohol consumption (5.3% of all global deaths) (estimates for 2016; WHO, 2018).
WHO Collaboration with UNODC on demand reduction and related measures and drug epidemiology

- Second edition of the International standards on prevention of drug use
- Field testing of International standards on the treatment of drug use disorders (involving 8 countries, completion by the end of 2018) with subsequent implementation at country level
- Multisite implementation study on community management of opioid overdose including the use of naloxone for preventing overdose deaths (SOS study) (involving 4 countries with potential to expand)
- Dissemination of WHO guidelines on identification and management of substance use in pregnancy (with training activities in 2 countries)
- Technical Guide on Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) of HIV in prisons
- The Strategic Advisory Group to the UN on HIV and drug use
- Global estimates of people who inject drugs (for the World Drug Report)
- Interagency Technical Working Group on Drug Epidemiology (led by WHO and UNODC)
  - Collaboration on treatment coverage for substance use disorders (SDG 2030 indicator 3.5.1)
Synthetic opioids (Fentanyl analogues) recommended for scheduling at 39th ECDD, November 2017:

- Carfentanil
- Ocfentanil
- Furanyl fentanyl
- Acryloylfentanyl
- Fluoroisobutyrfentanyl (4-FIBF)
- Tetrahydrofuranylfentanyl (THF-F)

41st meeting of WHO Expert Committee on Drug Dependence, 8-12 November 2018, will review:

- 5 Fentanyls
- Tramadol
Other WHO activities on synthetic opioids

- WHO Guidelines for the pharmacological and radiotherapeutic management of cancer pain in adults and adolescents (coming out soon)
- UNODC/WHO Technical tool for clinicians on NPS with a focus on synthetic opioids
- 5th WHO-UNODC Expert Consultation on NPS: Addressing the challenges of non-medical use of opioids, Geneva, 24-25 September 2018, that produced recommendations for future work that include:
  - Update the relevant WHO guidelines (treatment of opioid dependence, community management of opioid overdose)
  - Produce WHO guidelines on chronic non-cancer pain management
  - Sharing best practices in prevention and management of opioid overdose
  - Education and training of health and other relevant professionals
  - Global monitoring and surveillance system for NPS and synthetic opioids
- Intergovernmental expert meeting on synthetic opioids in collaboration with CND, UNODC, INCB – Vienna, 3-4 December 2018
Thank you and further information at:

http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/

http://www.who.int/gho/substance_abuse/en/

http://www.who.int/medicines/en/

http://www.who.int/hiv/

http://www.who.int/mental_health/en/