

Synthetic opioids and the non-medical use of prescription drugs pose increasing risks to public health and safety, as well as scientific, legal and regulatory challenges, including with regard to the scheduling of substances

Synthetic opioids, as opposed to naturally occurring opioids, are chemically produced in a laboratory. Their chemical structure can be either identical to or different from naturally occurring opioids, and their effects are designed to mimic and exponentially enhance those of natural opioids, making them much more lethal and deadly.

These synthetic opioids contain modified molecular structures of illegal and/or controlled substances to circumvent all existing drug laws. It is imperative that these synthetic opioids be controlled as a class under the International Conventions, as if they were controlled one substance at a time, drug cartels would just change one molecule and get out from under international law.

In considering permanent placement of the entire class of synthetic opioids on the most restrictive international drug control schedule, which is critical given their pervasiveness, toxicity and deadly nature, there are several issues and potential implications that need to be considered and addressed. These issues include potential impacts on incarceration of users as opposed to manufacturers and dealers, as well as the potential to hinder future medical research on these substances.