

Dilkushi Poovendran MSc, PhD is a technical officer within the WHO Division of Access to Medicines and Health Products. As part of the Secretariat of the WHO Expert Committee on Drug Dependence (ECDD), she plays a pivotal role in strengthening WHO's evidence-based substance review process within the international drug control system. She has coordinated the ECDD review of numerous novel synthetic opioids and other NPS, plants like cannabis and kratom, and psychoactive medicines to enable WHO to advise the UN on the appropriate level of international control that would protect against their public health-related harms while ensuring that they are available where needed for medical and scientific use.

Prior to joining WHO, Dr. Poovendran was a clinical researcher in community drug treatment services, coordinating the implementation of large clinical trials aimed at improving health-related outcomes of people who inject drugs. She was a researcher on clinical trials that investigated the use of contingency management or positive reinforcement to enhance Hepatitis B vaccination delivery and completion; and to improve attendance and adherence to opioid agonist maintenance treatment (OAMT).

Beyond research, Dr. Poovendran has served as a case worker in stimulant use services, as a crime victims advocate, and participated in a prison educational exchange programme.

With a background in neuroscience, Dr. Poovendran completed a PhD in clinical medicine from Imperial College London, with a focus on mental health services research. Her research investigated the feasibility and acceptability of conducting randomized controlled trials in community drug treatment services. Her expertise extends to evidence-based medicine, the evaluation of complex health interventions, harm reduction, and the clinical management of substance use disorders.