

UNODC October 2020  
David Nutt  
Drug Science commentary



# 6 major flaws in current criminal punishment-based drugs policy

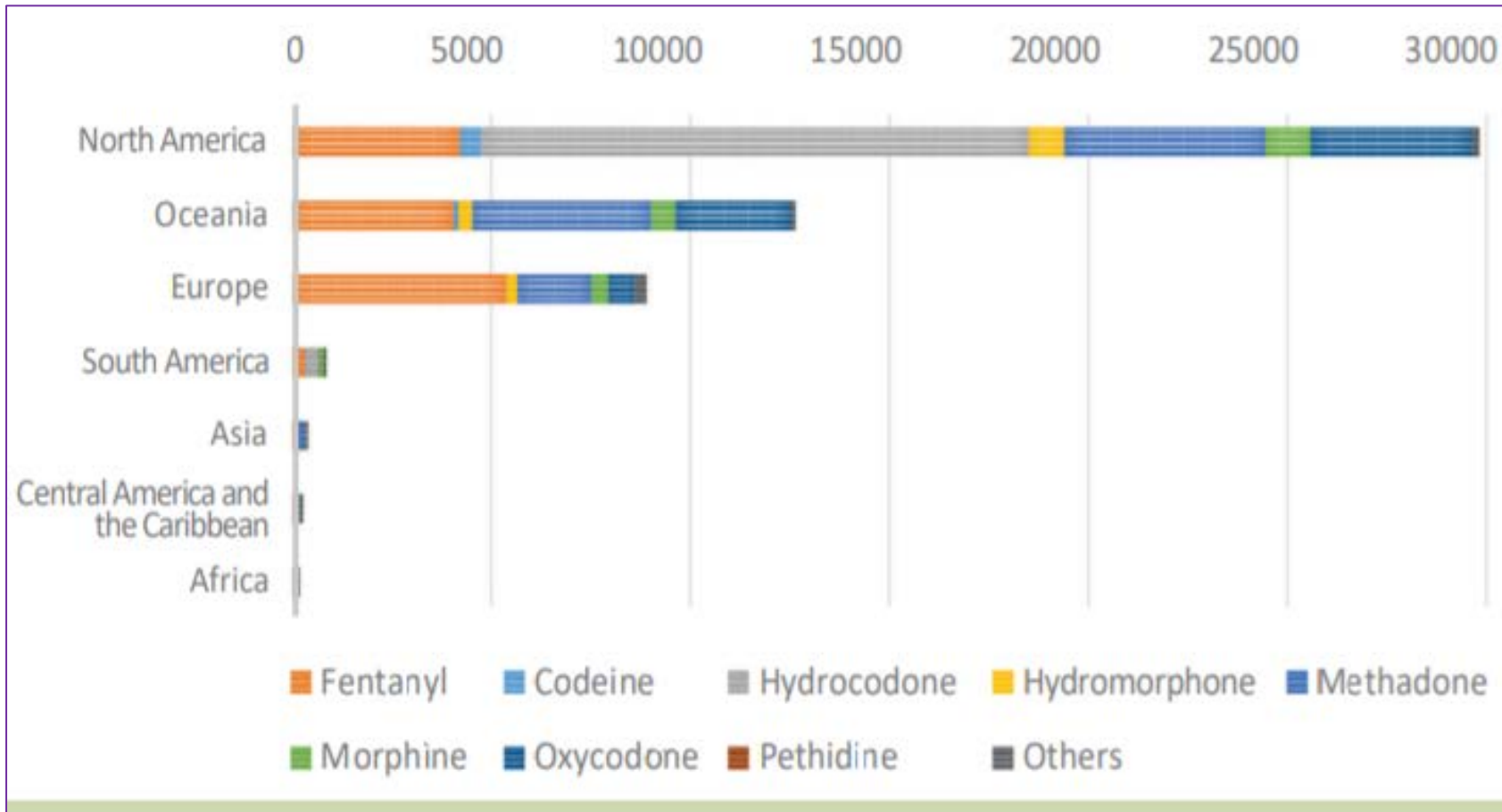
1. Is biased re drugs currently controlled = dishonest so immoral
2. Puts punishment above harm reduction – another moral choice
3. Punishments currently disproportionate to harms → more harm than good
4. Severely limits treatment and research
5. Encourages use of more toxic compounds
6. Wastes huge amounts of money

# The worst excesses of the current laws

- In many countries opioids not allowed - even for pain control - in fact most of world population denied them
- In most countries cannabis not available for pain spasticity etc
- Synthetic psychedelics not available for anything anywhere
- MDMA also banned in most of world
- As all are in UN Schedule1 research largely blocked

# Huge imbalance in analgesia access across the world

- average consumption of selected opioids per million inhabitants per day, 2016-2018

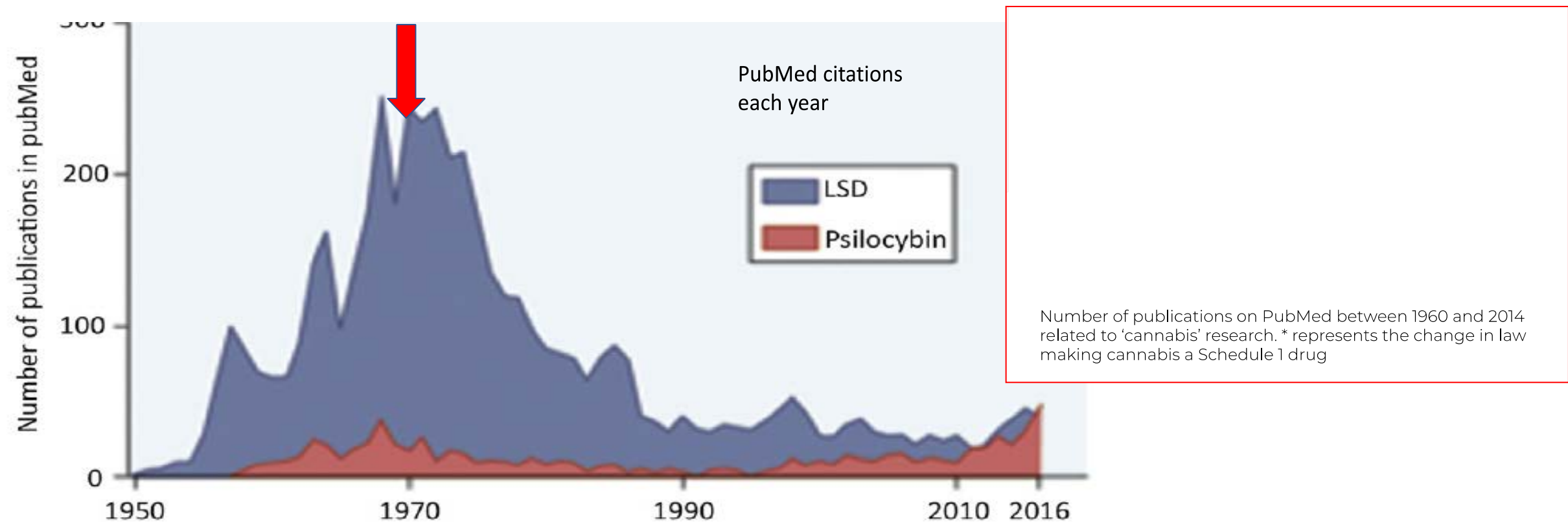


International Narcotics Control Board,  
Narcotic Drugs: Estimated World  
Requirements for 2020 –

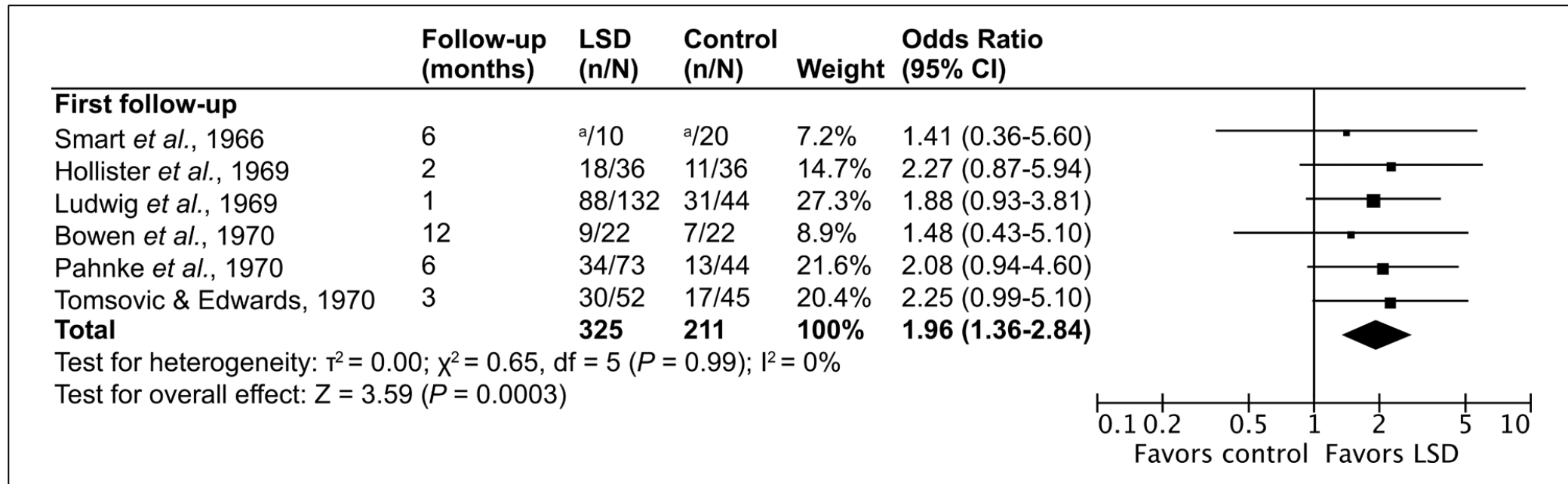
Statistics for 2018 (E/INCB/2019/2), pp.  
264

# How the UN Conventions destroyed research on psychedelics and cannabis

Impact of the 1971 UN Psychotropics Convention on psychedelic research



# 6 LSD trials in alcoholism – before the ban



**Figure 2.** Improvement on alcohol misuse at the first available follow-up after LSD versus control treatments.

<sup>a</sup>Continuous outcome data.

Effect size  $\geq$  all current therapies

Journal of Psychopharmacology 2012 Krebs and Johanssen

# Psychedelics for other psychiatric disorders?

## **Recent positive open trials of psilocybin in**

End-of-life anxiety/depression (Johns Hopkins and NYU)

### Addiction to

- Tobacco (Johns Hopkins) + double-blind RCT underway
- Alcohol (New Mexico)

### Ongoing

- RCT -v- escitalopram – reporting soon – Imperial College
- Anorexia –Johns Hopkins and Imperial College
- OCD - Yale and Imperial College
- And pain syndromes –
- + cluster headaches

But illegal status still profoundly limits research and increases costs