

Over the past 150 years, humanity has experienced several opioid crises but none as devastating as the present one. Around 53 million people worldwide used opioids in 2017. Among those people, around 29 million had also used opiates such as heroin and opium – these estimates are also 50 per cent higher than previously estimated. Opioids are a major concern many countries because of the severe health consequences associated with their use. For example, in 2017, the use of opioids accounted for 110,000 (66 per cent) of the 167,000 deaths worldwide attributed to drug use disorders.

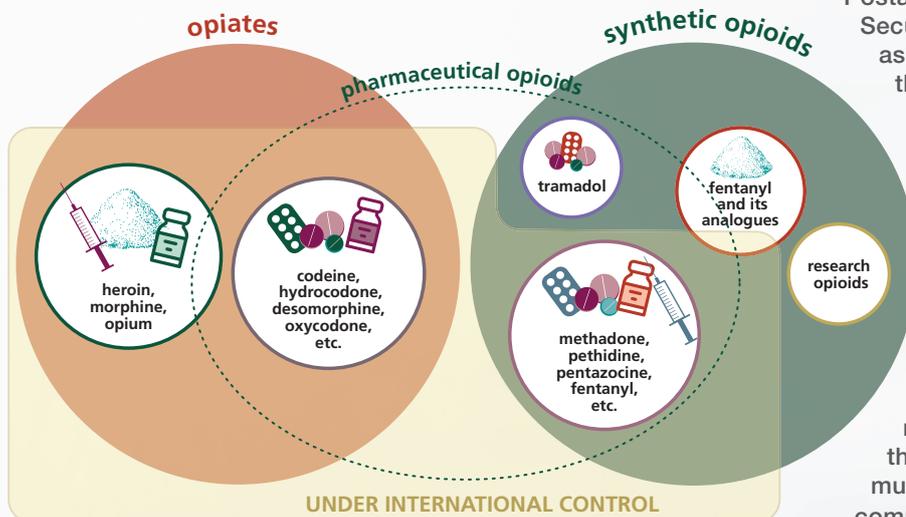
To support countries in addressing the ongoing synthetic opioids crisis affecting mainly North America, with fentanyl

and its analogues, and parts of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East with tramadol, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) launched an integrated strategy in June 2018.

The UNODC Opioid Strategy is a five-pillar integrated, inter-agency response to the global opioid crisis. Led by UNODC, the Strategy integrates the unique expertise housed within the Office with complimentary specialized knowledge across the UN system.

The UNODC Opioid Strategy coordinates inter-agency collaboration with key international partners such as the World Health Organization, International Narcotics Control Board, the World Customs Organization, Universal Postal Union, INTERPOL, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe as well as strategic regional organizations such as the Organization of American States, the European Monitoring Centre for Drug Dependence and Addiction, African Union and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

The integrated UNODC Opioid Strategy is supported by a comprehensive communications and advocacy plan, to highlight global activities, successes and best practices in addressing the opioid crisis. This will raise public awareness on the progress of the strategy and support the visibility of the multilateral response to the crisis and donor commitments and contributions.



The five pillars of the UNODC Opioid Strategy are



Pillar 1 Early warning and trend analysis
Generating evidence in support of effective policy decisions and operational responses



Pillar 2 Rationale prescribing and access to opioids for medical and scientific use
Promoting interagency cooperation in addressing the non-medical use of opioids



Pillar 3 Prevention and treatment programmes
Strengthening and supporting prevention and treatment programmes related to opioids



Pillar 4 International law enforcement operations to disrupt trafficking
Enhancing operational activities to prevent the diversion and trafficking of synthetic opioids



Pillar 5 Strengthening national and international counternarcotic capacity
Raising awareness, sharing best practices and promoting international cooperation