

The Ice Epidemic

Public Defenders Conference

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Topics:

- How did we get here?
- Is it working?
- Why doesn't it work?
- What is 'ice'?
- What should we do about ice?
- What do we do?
- What stops us doing what we should do?
- Conclusion

How did we get here?

- **1909 First Opium Commission, Shanghai**
- **The Hague 1912, Geneva 1925**
- **Single Convention 1961**
- **Psychotropic Substances Convention 1971**
- **Trafficking Convention 1988**
- **UN organisations: CND, UNODC, INCB**

How did we get here? 2

- **USA major force adoption, expansion, maintenance global drug prohibition**
- **War Against Drugs 1971 huge political success RM Nixon**
- **Copied around world**

How did we get here? 3

- **Australia represented 1925 Geneva**
- **1953 Australia banned heroin**
- **1960s US troops R&R leave Vietnam**
- **1985 adoption 'harm minimisation'**
- **1997 adoption 'Tough on Drugs'**
- **2000 heroin shortage – increasing amphetamine**

Is it working?

'Drug prohibition is a joke inspired by religion designed to enrich criminals and terrorists in the name of promoting morality. It is working, except for promoting morality'

Is it working? 2

- **Outcomes - ↑**
 - **Cultivation, production, consumption**
 - **Range types drugs – ‘iron law of prohibition’**
 - **Adverse consequences also ↑**
 - **Deaths**
 - **Disease**
 - **Crime**
 - **Corruption**

Is it working? 3

- **Serious collateral damage**
 - Narco countries
 - Narco terrorism
- **Expensive**
 - Customs
 - Police
 - Courts
 - Prisons

Why doesn't it work?

- **\$ US 322 Billion global turnover**
- **Arms > drugs > oil & gas**
- **Profit 26-58 % turnover**
- **1 kg Heroin \$1K source, \$300 K destination**
- **Law of Supply and Demand**
- **Economics, politics in opposition**
- **Intuitive vs. counter-intuitive**

What is 'ice'?

- In the beginning: amphetamine
- ATS increase in Asia 1990s
- Amphetamine to methamphetamine
- MTA to 'ice': cocaine to 'crack'
- Salts, bases
- Advantages inhalation vapour
- Popular MSM, then heterosexual

What should we do about ice?

- **Treat primarily health, social problem**
- **Increase funding health, social interventions**
- **RAND 1993 return \$ US 1.00 cocaine**
 - **17 ¢ coca plant eradication**
 - **32 ¢ interdiction**
 - **52 ¢ customs, police**
 - **\$ 7.46 treatment cocaine drug users**

What do we do?

- **93% resources to drug law enforcement**
- **7% drug treatment**
- **Stimulant Treatment Programme NSW
2006, 2 sites**
- **Core = psycho social interventions**
- **Engage, motivational enhancement,
CBT, narrative, contingency
contracting**
- **Attract, retain, benefit**

Dex Substitution Treatment

- Like methadone treatment, NRT
- Small minority treatment refractory
- Oral, legal, slow acting, supervised vs. injecting, illegal, fast acting
- No sustained release dexamphetamine
Australia
- Research: UK, USA, Australia
- More research needed

What stops us doing what we should do?

- **Politics**
- **Funding**
- **Stigma**
- **'It's their own fault'**
- **Deontology vs. Consequentialism**

Conclusion:

1. 'Ice' product 'War Against Drugs' – iron law prohibition
2. Australia badly affected
3. Good results: health, social interventions, inexpensive
4. Terrible results: drug law enforcement
5. Politics sustains failed, futile approach
6. Problems 'mala prohibita' laws

‘if something cannot go on forever, it will stop’

Herb Stein

‘The main difference between genius and stupidity is that there are limits to genius’