

International Doctors for Healthy Drug Policies Supports the Global Commission on Drug Policy’s Report, “*The War on Drugs and HIV/AIDS, How the Criminalization of Drug Use Fuels the Global Pandemic*”

International Doctors for Healthy Drug Policies joins the distinguished Global Commission on Drug Policy in condemning the drug war as a failure and a major factor sustaining the global HIV/AIDS epidemic. We support their call for immediate, major reforms of the global drug prohibition regime to correct the policy distortions that favor criminal justice over public health evidence-based addiction treatments such as methadone and buprenorphine maintenance, and proven public health interventions like overdose prevention training with naloxone, and sterile needle and syringe and condom distribution in addressing the harms of drugs.

We further call on our fellow doctors to advocate for drug policies and practices that emphasize health and respect the human rights of people who use drugs. We know that HIV and HCV are both preventable and treatable, drug dependency is treatable and overdose deaths are preventable where there is easy access to care.

We must reduce the stigma, incarceration, and fear of prosecution and persecution that prevents easy access to evidence-based interventions for people who need them for our communities to be healthy.

Throughout the world, commercial sex workers and people who use drugs are over-represented in criminal justice systems and in the number of people living with the HIV and HCV. Research has consistently shown that repressive drug law enforcement practices force people who use drugs away from evidence-based medical care and into hidden environments where HIV and HCV risk increases through needle and syringe sharing and unprotected sex, creating a barrier to treatment and increasing the risk of disease transmission by infected individuals.

Drug use now accounts for an estimated one-third of new HIV infections outside of sub-Saharan Africa. The report highlights that drug-related HIV transmission is particularly rampant in Russia, Eastern Europe, parts of Asia, and some U.S. cities are also epicenters of drug-driven epidemics. Restricted access to evidence-based drug treatment and drug injection equipment and prohibitions on its possession encourage users to share needles and syringes, one of the most efficient routes for transmission of HIV, HCV and HBV.

IDHDP joins the Global Commission on Drug Policy in calling for leadership in ending drug policies that fuel HIV and HCV and ignore the medical needs of people who use drugs at the expense of us all. Let doctors be an example and demand the social and political support for policies that focus on the primacy of the health of the public.

International Doctors for Healthy Drug Policies represents medical doctors from more than 50 countries worldwide. For more information about IDHDP go to www.idhdp.com.