**Usage of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances for Medical Purposes: A Critical Review**

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**Abstract**

The utilization of narcotics and psychotropic substances in the field of medicine is an intricately regulated and complex area of healthcare. These substances, which are derived from opium, cannabis, and synthetic compounds, have demonstrated their effectiveness in managing pain, providing anesthesia, and treating psychiatric disorders. However, due to their potential for abuse and addiction, rigorous monitoring and regulation are imperative. This article centers on the ethical and legal considerations surrounding their prescription and stresses the significance of taking a balanced approach that safeguards patient well-being while deterring illegal utilization.

**Keywords-** poisonous drugs, narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, Legalization of NDPS

**Introduction**

There are strict regulations in place to control the production, sale, and use of psychoactive substances under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act of 1985[[1]](#footnote-1) and the NDPS Amendment Bill of 2021[[2]](#footnote-2). These regulations aim to reduce drug abuse and prevent trafficking. However, recent evidence suggests that these substances may have therapeutic properties in medicine. Therefore, this study aims to analyze current scientific research and advocate for the wider acceptance and utilization of psychoactive substances for medical purposes. The use of psychoactive substances for medical purposes has been a controversial topic for a long time. The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act was passed to combat drug abuse and the illegal trade of these substances, and it has achieved some success. Nonetheless, it is essential to recognize the potential medical benefits that these substances may offer.

In 1985, the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act was implemented to classify narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances based on their potential for abuse and therapeutic value. This act imposes strict regulations to prevent the misuse and illicit trade of these substances. Recent scientific studies have highlighted the medical potential of these substances in various fields, such as pain management, mental health, movement disorders, and palliative care.

1. **Pain Management**: Substances (such as morphine and codeine) have long been used for pain relief, especially in cases of acute and chronic pain.

2. **Mental Health**: Psychotropic substances (such as Opioids) like antidepressants and anxiolytics have proven to be effective in the treatment of mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder.[[3]](#footnote-3)

3. **Movement Disorders**: Certain substances (Dopamine as in Eldopa) have shown promising results in the management of movement disorders like Parkinson's disease.

4. **Palliative Care**: The use of narcotic drugs (Codeine, Tramadol, Morphine, Oxycodone, Buprenorphine, Fentanyl, Bhanga [Cannabis sativa, an Upavisha] used in diarrhoea, irritable bowel syndrome, Insomnia]) for alleviating suffering in patients with terminal illnesses has been widely recognized as an essential component of palliative care.

**Benefits of Legalization**

1. **Improving Patient Access:**Legalizing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in medicine can improve accessibility to treatment for patients with chronic pain or mental health disorders. These individuals often encounter obstacles in obtaining effective medication, causing unnecessary distress. Legalization could resolve this problem, enabling healthcare providers to prescribe appropriate and regulated treatments to those who require them.

2**. Comprehensive Regulation and Quality Control**: If narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances used in medicines were legalized, they would fall under the supervision of regulatory authorities. This would allow for stringent quality control measures to be put in place to ensure that these substances are manufactured and produced according to standardized guidelines. Pharmaceutical companies would need to follow strict regulations, leading to safer and more efficient medications for patients.

3. **Better Drug Education and Support**: Instead of condemning narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, legalizing them for medicinal use could lead to the creation of comprehensive drug education programs. These programs can educate people about the appropriate usage, risks associated with misuse, and the significance of seeking medical advice. By prioritizing education and support, society can more effectively combat addiction and encourage responsible usage.

4. **Reduction in Illegal Drug Trade**: The criminalization of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances has resulted in the expansion of the illegal drug trade. However, legalizing these substances for medicinal purposes may help to decrease the demand for illegal drugs. Patients who need such medication would no longer need to obtain it from illicit sources, as they would have access to legal alternatives provided by healthcare professionals. This could potentially lower drug-related crimes and reduce the pressure on law enforcement agencies.

5. **Potential for medical Breakthroughs**: The legalization of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in medicine could lead to ground-breaking medical research. These substances have demonstrated potential in treating various conditions, including chronic pain, epilepsy, and PTSD. Legalizing their use in research and clinical trials could help unlock their therapeutic benefits and advance the development of more effective treatments.

Although narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances can be beneficial in medical treatment, it is crucial to understand their potential side effects and addictive nature. With proper regulation and medical supervision, the risks can be minimized. Several countries, including the United States, Canada, and some European nations, have established regulations that permit the medical usage of these substances[[4]](#footnote-4). These nations acknowledge the significance of providing access to such substances to patients who can benefit from their therapeutic effects. The growing scientific evidence supporting the medical usage of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances highlights the need to re-evaluate current regulations and explore ways to increase their acceptance. By carefully weighing the risks and benefits and implementing stringent controls, it is possible to strike a balance between preventing drug abuse and ensuring access to these substances for legitimate medical purposes.

**Conclusion**

According to the NDPS Act of 1985, it is illegal to finance or cultivate certain drugs, such as Cannabis, manufacture psychotropic substances, or harbour individuals involved in these activities. Those found guilty of such offenses may face a minimum of 10 years of rigorous imprisonment, which can be extended up to 20 years, and a fine of at least Rs.1 Lakh[[5]](#footnote-5). Repeat offenders may face the death penalty. Additionally, any property used for these illegal activities will be seized. The Narcotics Control Bureau, established in 1986 under the NDPS Act, is responsible for investigating and prosecuting these crimes.[[6]](#footnote-6)

The legalization of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in medicine represents a bold and decisive step toward improving healthcare. Enabling patients to access regulated and quality-controlled drugs, while simultaneously educating them on responsible usage, has the potential to reduce the illegal drug trade and yield significant benefits for public health. While some may argue that legalizing these substances could lead to an increase in drug abuse, it is crucial to recognize the potential advantages that regulated access can provide to those who require them. Therefore, it is imperative that this issue be approached with careful consideration and that comprehensive frameworks be developed that prioritize patient well-being and responsible usage. With a measured and cautious implementation, legalization can pave the way for a brighter future in healthcare.

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