

UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL



Distr.
GENERAL
E/CN.7/266
8 February 1954
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Commission on Narcotic Drugs
Ninth session

THE MEDICAL USE OF DIACETYLMORPHINE (HEROIN)

Note by the Secretary-General

Resolution of the Sixth World Health Assembly

1. On 15 June 1953, the Secretary-General received notification from the Director-General of the World Health Organization of the following resolution adopted by the Sixth World Health Assembly at its ninth plenary meeting on 20 May 1953:

"The Sixth World Health Assembly,

"Having considered recommendations of the Expert Committee on Drugs Liable to Produce Addiction regarding the use of diacetylmorphine and the action taken by the Director-General on these recommendations at the request of the Executive Board,^{1/}

"Being convinced that diacetylmorphine is not irreplaceable for medical practice,

"Being convinced that the abolition of legally produced diacetylmorphine by Member States would facilitate the struggle against its illicit use,

"1. RECOMMENDS that campaigns be undertaken with the assistance of appropriate bodies to convince doctors and governments that diacetylmorphine is not irreplaceable for medical practice;

"2. RECOMMENDS that Member States which have not already done so abolish the importation and production of the drug; and

"3. REQUESTS the Director-General to communicate this resolution to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for consideration and appropriate action at an early date."

2. The Secretary-General communicated this resolution to the Economic and Social Council during its sixteenth session (July-August 1953) (document E/2476) and

informed the Council that he proposed, subject to any directions which the Council might wish to give, to include an item on the medical use of diacetylmorphine on the provisional agenda of the ninth session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, in accordance with rule 6 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions. The Council gave no other directions, and the item was accordingly placed on the provisional agenda.

3. According to information collected and received by the World Health Organization^{2/} the positions of governments on the question of dispensing with the medical use of diacetylmorphine or the factual situation in countries whose governments had not announced their positions are as of January 1954 as set out in the annex to this paper.

Possible courses of action

4. The following possibilities are open to the Commission if it decides to recommend action as proposed in paragraph 3 of the resolution of the World Health Organization:

- (a) Interim agreement;
 - (b) Recommendation to Governments by the Economic and Social Council or by the General Assembly;
 - (c) Provision in the draft Single Convention;
 - (d) Decision regarding inclusion of diacetylmorphine in Schedule IV of the draft Single Convention.
- (a) Interim agreement

5. The Commission may consider the conclusion of an interim agreement to prohibit the manufacture, import and - either immediately or after the exhaustion of stocks - the use of diacetylmorphine. Such an agreement would presumably be included among those narcotic treaties to be replaced by the proposed Single Convention which the Commission is at present framing, and in this connexion the Commission would no doubt consider the length of time which it anticipated the agreement would be in effect, i.e. the period between its entry into force and that of the Single Convention. If the Commission concluded that an interim agreement should be adopted, it could also recommend to the

^{2/} A6/2, pp. 3-7, and WHO Official Records 48, p.204.

Economic and Social Council the procedure by which this might be done, e.g. by a conference of plenipotentiaries, or by the General Assembly on the basis of a draft text approved by the Council. In either case the Commission would no doubt itself arrange for the preparation of a draft text.

(b) Recommendation to Governments by the Economic and Social Council or by the General Assembly

6. The Commission may recommend the Economic and Social Council either itself to make a recommendation to Governments, or propose to the Council that it should recommend the General Assembly to do so. A recommendation could also be considered in conjunction with one of the other possible courses of action.

(c) Provision in the draft Single Convention

7. As regards the insertion of a special provision in the draft Single Convention prohibiting diacetylmorphine, the Commission will recall that it adopted during its seventh session a decision to the effect that the new Single Convention should include a Schedule IV which would list drugs whose prohibition would be recommended. It was stressed that no Party to the treaty would be legally bound to prohibit such drugs. It was also decided not to enumerate these drugs for the time being.^{3/} During this discussion, however, several members expressed the opinion that diacetylmorphine was one of the drugs which probably would be included in Schedule IV.^{4/} It was also decided that the provisions of Article 10 of the International Convention for limiting the Manufacture and regulating the Distribution of Narcotic Drugs of 13 July 1931 as amended by the Protocol of 11 December 1946, which prescribe strict conditions under which diacetylmorphine may be exported, should be incorporated in the new treaty.^{5/}

A special provision would be in substitution for, or would modify these provisions.

(d) Decision regarding inclusion of diacetylmorphine in Schedule IV of the draft Single Convention

8. The Commission may take a decision now to include diacetylmorphine in Schedule IV of the draft Single Convention.

^{3/} E/2423, paragraphs 93-94.

^{4/} E/CN.7/SR.173, pp. 4-7.

^{5/} E/2423, Annex "C", paragraph 8.

ANNEX

DISPENSABILITY OF DIACETYLMORPHINE

Country (WHO members, associate members and non-member States)	In favour of dispensability	Not in favour of dispensability	Facts indicate diacetylmorphine is not used or will not be used following exhaustion of stocks	Facts indicate diacetylmorphine is or may be used under circumstances other than those mentioned in the previous heading
Afghanistan	X			
Albania				X
Argentina	X			
Australia	X <u>1/</u>			
Austria	X			
Belgium		X		
Bolivia			X <u>2/</u>	
Brazil	X			
Bulgaria			X	
Burma	X			
Byelorussian SSR			X	
Cambodia	X			
Canada		X		
Ceylon	X			
Chile	X			
China	X			
Colombia			X <u>3/</u>	
Costa Rica	X			
Cuba	X			
Czechoslovakia				X
Denmark	X			

- 1/ The representative of Australia made a statement to the Committee on Programme and Budget which was recorded in the Summary Record as follows: "Mr. SHAW (Australia) supported the motion [i.e. the draft of the resolution quoted in paragraph 1 above which was later amended in points of detail] and informed the committee that his country had prohibited the importation of heroin and of drugs containing heroin. There was no domestic production." (WHO Official Records 48, p. 205)
- 2/ Note by WHO. The importation of and trade in heroin are prohibited generally by Supreme Decree of the Minister of Health of 7 December 1950. (A6/2, p. 5)
- 3/ Note by WHO. The importation and manufacture of diacetylmorphine and products which contain this drug have been prohibited since 1 January 1940, and likewise its legal use from the moment when existing stocks have been consumed. (Decree No. 1959 of 4 October 1939) (A6/2, p. 7)

ANNEX
(continued)

Country (WHO members, associate members and non-member States)	In favour of dispensability	Not in favour of dispensability	Facts indicate diacetylmorphine is not used or will not be used following exhaustion of stocks	Facts indicate diacetylmorphine is or may be used under circumstances other than those mentioned in the previous heading
Dominican Republic	X			
Ecuador	X			
Egypt	X			
El Salvador	X			
Ethiopia	X			
Finland	X			
France		X		
Germany, Federal Republic of	X			
Greece	X			
Guatemala	X			
Haiti	X			
Honduras			X	
Hungary				X
Iceland	X			
India	X			
Indonesia, Republic of the United States of	X			
Iran	X			
Iraq	X			
Ireland	X			
Israel	X			
Italy		X		
Japan	X			
Jordan, Hashemite Kingdom of the	X			
Korea	X			
Laos	X			
Lebanon	X			
Liberia			X	
Libya				X 4/

4/ Note by the Secretariat: Libya furnished diacetylmorphine estimates to the Drug Supervisory Body for 1954. (E/DSB/11, p. 41)

ANNEX
(continued)

Country (WHO members, associate members and non-member States)	In favour of dispensability	Not in favour of dispensability	Facts indicate diacetylmorphine is not used or will not be used following exhaustion of stocks	Facts indicate diacetylmorphine is or may be used under circumstances other than those mentioned in the previous heading
Luxembourg	X			
Mexico	X			
Monaco	X			
Morocco (French Zone)				X
Netherlands	X 5/			
New Zealand		X		
Nicaragua	X			
Norway	X			
Pakistan	X			
Panama	X			
Paraguay				X
Peru			X	
Philippines, Republic of the	X		X	
Poland			X	
Portugal	X			
Romania				X
Saudi Arabia				X
Southern Rhodesia	X			
Spain			X 6/	

- 5/ The representative of the Netherlands made a statement to the Committee on Programme and Budget which was recorded in the Summary Record as follows:
 "Professor JULIUS (Netherlands) seconded the United States motion. Originally the Netherlands Government had been against any suggestion of the kind, but after renewed enquiry among the medical profession it had found that only 50 grams were issued on doctor's prescription per year. There was no illicit use of the drug. His Government therefore withdrew its former purely theoretical reservations."
 (WHO Official Records, 48, p. 205)
- 6/ Note by WHO. The manufacture of heroin is forbidden by decree of 3 August 1932, medical prescription and the sale by pharmacies to the public by another decree of 10 August 1933.

ANNEX
(continued)

Country (WHO members, associate members and non-member States)	In favour of dispensability	Not in favour of dispensability	Facts indicate diacetylmorphine is not used or will not be used following exhaustion of stocks	Facts indicate diacetylmorphine is or may be used under circumstances other than those mentioned in the previous heading
Sweden 7/	X			
Switzerland	X			
Syria	X			
Thailand	X			
Tunisia				X
Turkey	X			
Ukranian SSR			X	
Union of South Africa	X			
USSR			X	
United Kingdom		X		
United States of America	X			
Uruguay	X			
Venezuela	X			
Viet-Nam		X		
Yemen			X 8/	
Yugoslavia	X			

- 7/ Note by WHO. According to a letter of 20 October 1951 from the Director-General of Public Health Services, investigation for finding "a suitable substitute" for heroin was not yet finished. In the PCOB Report, 1952, E/OB/8, November 1952, p. 9, it is stated: "In Sweden the manufacture of diacetylmorphine was discontinued as from 1 January 1952, and there is good reason to hope that consumption in this country will presently cease altogether." Importation of this drug is not permitted; in fact, this drug does not figure on the list for which estimates of consumption are drawn (DSB 1953, E/DSB/10, 15 December 1952, p. 25). Therefore Sweden had been counted among the countries in favour of abolition. (A6/2, p.4)
- 8/ Note by WHO. No statistics available; but estimates for 1953: nil (E/DSB/10, p. 38) (A6/2, p.7)
