



Personal information on the author

First Name Matt

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Position Research Expert

Organisation UNODC

Most important career path

Matthew Nice is a research expert at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime specializing in the manufacture, trafficking, and consumption of amphetamine-type stimulants. Mr. Nice works in the Laboratory Science and Statistics and Surveys Sections, under the Global *Synthetic Monitoring: Analyses Reporting and Trends* (SMART) Programme designed to enhance a country's ability to generate, manage and use data related to synthetic drugs. Mr. Nice has experience in regional and global drug control issues, working in Austria, New Zealand and the United States. Prior to joining the UNODC he worked in the United States managing a government research and evaluation unit evaluating crime and drug policies, monitored drug and crime-related patterns and trends, and measured criminal justice and addiction treatment system performance.

Title of presentation

The State of the Global Synthetic Drug Situation

Description of the contribution

Globally, the demand for synthetic drugs—in particular amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS), such as amphetamine, methamphetamine and ecstasy—exceeds demand for heroin and cocaine, combined. With between 16 – 51 million annual users of amphetamines, they are the only class of drug which have increased treatment demand in every region of the world since their rapid expansion in the 1990's. The speed in which these drug emerge on a market, expand, and change leave many governments struggling to effectively respond.

Unlike heroin and cocaine, the situation with synthetic drugs like ATS is significantly more complex to assess: their manufacture is not dependent on the cultivation of a plant raw material and are therefore not geographically restricted; starting materials are often cheap and readily available; their formulas are easily adaptable challenging traditional control mechanisms; the locations where manufacture occurs change rapidly; and new synthetics appear each year, often engineered to circumvent national and international laws.

The use of these drugs and their associated harm vary depending on substance and route of administration, often demonstrating regional specificity. Europe primarily encounters amphetamine and "ecstasy", and in some regions methamphetamine. However, the continent has seen a recent trend towards many new synthetics, available cheaply via the internet. In many cases little is known about the long-term effects of these new substances in humans, and with no controls over their composition and dosage these compounds, even in small doses, pose potential dangers associated with their use.