

Review

A review of drug policy in the Golden Crescent: Towards the development of more effective solutions



Anushka Talpur, Tony P. George*

Schizophrenia Division, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), Department of Psychiatry, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada M5T 1R8

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 31 January 2014

Received in revised form 3 July 2014

Accepted 4 July 2014

Keywords:

Prevalence

Drug abuse

Drug policy

Pakistan

Afghanistan

Iran

ABSTRACT

There is a high prevalence of drug trafficking and misuse in Asia. Drugs grown in Afghanistan are trafficked through Iran and Pakistan to the rest of the world. This has led to an increase in the prevalence of drug use disorders in these regions, especially heroin. This has in turn led to an increase in the use of syringes and syringe sharing which has resulted in the exponential spread of blood borne diseases such as HIV/AIDS. A lack of awareness of the detrimental use of heroin, syringe sharing and the concept of HIV has been revealed. The literature reviewed provides evidence for a change in policy with an increase in epidemiological and clinical research in these regions as well as an increase in public awareness.

© 2014 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

Contents

1. Introduction	31
2. Drug trafficking routes	32
2.1. Prevalence of drug use and abuse	33
2.2. Heroin use in the Golden Crescent	33
2.3. Needle sharing and the rise of HIV	33
3. Treatment issues	34
3.1. Policy in the Golden Crescent	34
4. Conclusions and recommendations	35
Acknowledgements	35
References	35

1. Introduction

Drug misuse has been of significant concern to countries in the developed world but in the recent years drug use has gained attention as a growing public health problem in developing nations (UNODC, 2012). Opium smoking has long been a traditional practice in parts of Asia with relatively common use in both

Afghanistan and in the neighbouring states of Iran and Pakistan (Beyrer, 2011). However, illicit opium production in the last decades has evolved dramatically from its traditional roots. Years of turmoil and violence in Afghanistan caused by the Soviet invasion of 1980 which continue to this day have greatly facilitated the opium economy. During the reign of the Taliban, production of opium was closely monitored but since 2001 and their exit, production has exponentially increased (UNODC, 2009; Beyrer, 2011). This has made Afghanistan a leading producer of illicit drugs, and it now is estimated to produce about 60–70% of the world's illicit opioid supply (UNODC, 2012). Consequently, this has led to an increase in the volume of trafficking the drug out of Afghanistan mainly to two neighbouring countries, Pakistan and

* Corresponding author at: University of Toronto, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 250 College Street, CS 734, Toronto, ON, Canada M5T 1R8.

Tel.: +1 416 535 8501x4544; fax: +1 416 979 4676.

E-mail address: tony.george@camh.ca (T.P. George).

Iran. This region has been coined the “Golden Crescent” and has become the world’s single largest source of illicit opiates (UNODC, 2009) and as well, for cannabis cultivation and trafficking (Chouvy, 2002; Todd and Safi, 2005; UNODC, 2009).

An increase in the volume of drug trafficked through these countries has also led to an increase in the misuse of various drugs including heroin and cannabis. Research studies have illustrated a shift in the use of cannabis vs. heroin as the drug of choice (Kulsudjarit, 2004). Historically in these regions heroin was smoked but recent trends have seen an increase in the use of intravenous heroin use. Syringes are used to acquire a faster and more potent high (Beyrer, 2011). This in turn has contributed to the prevalence of blood borne diseases such as Hepatitis B and C and HIV/AIDS (Aceijas and Stimson, 2004; Todd et al., 2007). The increased prevalence of HIV/AIDS was found to be quite alarming and has been declared as an ‘epidemic’ by the United Nations (UN, 2011). Thus, there is an imminent need to revise health policies in these regions to combat this problem before it grows any further as the current ones are not adequate to deal with the issues.

Acquiring data to assess drug trafficking, use and abuse is challenging in most countries as it is illegal and difficult to gain access to this information. In countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran it is exceptionally challenging due to several other reasons such as the current political climate, the complete lack of

infrastructure and the taboo associated with drug use in Muslim countries. Although data is scant on the topic and most statistics are likely underreported, the increasing prevalence in these areas cannot be ignored as this has resulted in detrimental health consequences in the region, and poses a considerable threat to the security of the Western world as well. In September 2013 more than a dozen kilograms of heroin woven into carpets were seized in Toronto originating from Pakistan. This was reported as one of the largest amounts of heroin seized in Toronto (Canadian Press, 2013). Large amounts of heroin have also been seized in countries neighbouring the golden crescent including Turkey about 16,407 metric tonnes, Russian 3157 metric tonnes and China 5838 metric tonnes (UNODC, 2011).

This article reviews the literature on the increased prevalence and consequences of heroin use and abuse in the Golden Crescent, and makes recommendations towards improving drug policy in this important and emerging region.

2. Drug trafficking routes

Illicit opium is grown in Afghanistan and transported via Pakistan and Iran to destinations markets in Europe, Asia and to a lesser extent, Africa and North America (UNODC, 2013) (Fig. 1). Pakistan shares a 2500 km long, porous border with Afghanistan,

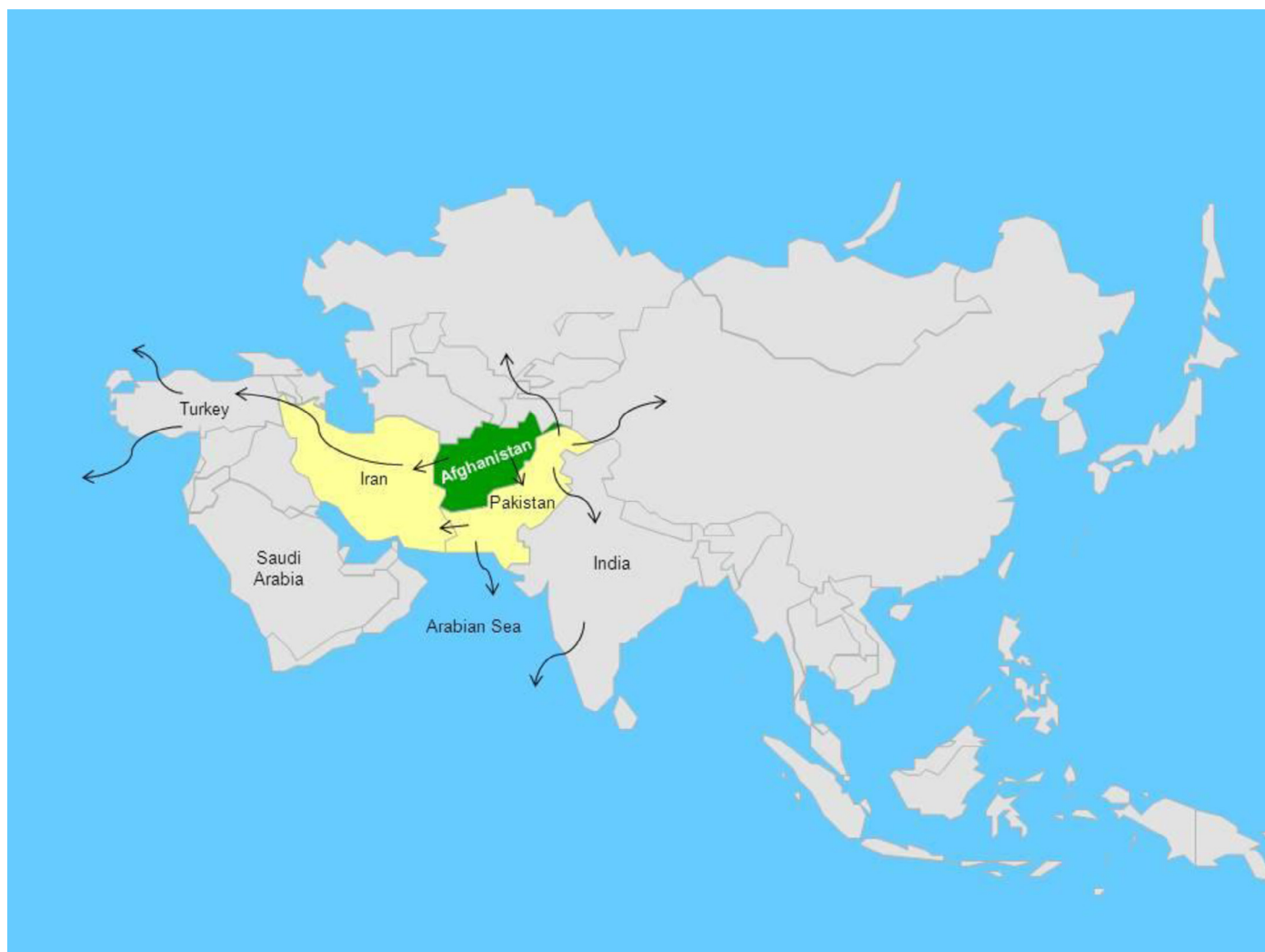


Fig. 1. Map illustrating the trafficking routes of the Golden Crescent. Drugs grown in Afghanistan are trafficked to Pakistan and Iran. These drugs are then transported further through land, air and sea to different regions of the world.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6787906>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6787906>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)