



**World Health
Organization**



**International
Narcotics
Control Board**

ASSISTANCE MECHANISM TO FACILITATE ADEQUATE TREATMENT OF PAIN USING OPIOID ANALGESICS

Joint Report of the Director-General of the World Health Organization and the President of the International Narcotics Control Board

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution 2005/25 and the World Health Assembly (WHA) resolution WHA58.22 invited the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to examine the feasibility of a possible assistance mechanism that would facilitate the adequate treatment of pain using opioid analgesics.

ECOSOC resolution 2005/25 also invited WHO and INCB to inform the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) of the results of that examination. A Joint Interim Report of the Director-General of WHO and the President of INCB was presented to the CND during its forty-ninth session in March 2006. The present document contains the findings of WHO and INCB on the feasibility of the assistance mechanism, as requested in the above resolutions.

WHO and INCB reviewed documents and studies on the availability of opioid analgesics at the country level and examined the activities taken and planned by various bodies to assist Governments in their responsibility to ensure the availability of those medicines for legitimate medical use.

Although there is no shortage of licitly produced opioid analgesics raw material worldwide and global licit consumption of opioids has increased substantially in the past two decades, the available information confirmed that in many countries access to opioid analgesics continues to be difficult, due to impediments of various nature.

WHO and INCB concluded that an assistance mechanism to facilitate adequate treatment of pain using opioid analgesics is feasible. Therefore, WHO started the preparation of an assistance programme (Access to Controlled Medications Programme) and elaborated the Framework of that Programme¹ in consultation with INCB. Activities of the Programme will address all identified impediments, with a focus on regulatory, attitude and knowledge impediments. The Programme consists of two parts: Part I and Part II. Bearing in mind the resolutions ECOSOC 2005/25 and WHA58.22, and also bearing in mind the INCB's mandates stemming from the international drug control treaties, the Board has found that it can associate itself only with Part I of the Programme. INCB has and will continue to provide its expertise to this part of the Programme.

¹ http://www.who.int/medicines/areas/quality_safety/AccessControlledMedicinesProgr.Framework.pdf

In view of the overall responsibility of WHO regarding the use of medicines, and recognizing that major barriers to access to controlled medicines are common for different health conditions, the Programme will, in addition to opioid analgesics, address, in Part II, access to other medicines listed in the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines made from substances controlled under the three international drug control treaties.²

Bearing in mind that WHO's objective is the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health, and taking into account WHO's ongoing activities and programmes regarding the use of medicines, and other related WHA and ECOSOC resolutions, the Programme should be implemented by WHO as an integral programme that includes Parts I and II.

For various categories of controlled medicines, depending on the evidence for insufficient access, activities for improvement will be undertaken immediately, or surveys on the extent of the problem will be held first, after which it will be decided whether any further action is necessary. The Programme will address factors that cause impediments for access, but will not donate or finance the medicines themselves.

The Programme will be implemented by WHO. Other interested parties are invited to also support the implementation of this Programme with a view to facilitating access to opioid analgesics and other controlled medicines for the treatment of disease worldwide.

Geneva, 2 March 2007



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Vienna, 2 March 2007



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² The Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961, as amended by the 1972 Protocol; the Convention on Psychotropic Substances, 1971; and the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988.