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Lecture 5: An Overview of Opium/ Heroin and Coca/Cocaine

Objectives

By the end of this lecture, the students should be able to:

1. Identify Major Opium Production Areas: Focus on Afghanistan, Laos, and Myanmar as key opium producers and the rise of local drug use.
2. Examine the Social Impact of Drug Use: Explore the social challenges of drug addiction in producer countries, including the overlap of producers and consumers.
3. Analyze Cocaine Production and Consumption: Review the history of coca use in the Andes and the growth of cocaine production in Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru, with a focus on the U.S. market.
4. Address the Consequences of Cocaine Abuse: Discuss the societal impacts of cocaine addiction on welfare, treatment, and law enforcement in affected areas.

An Overview of Opium/ Heroin and Coca/Cocaine

The majority of the world's opium is cultivated in Afghanistan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Myanmar, with several other nations also contributing to production, albeit in smaller quantities. The emergence of significant numbers of users and addicts in these regions signifies profound social changes that complicate efforts to curb drug cultivation. While social issues can be resistant to change, drug use has far-reaching effects, impacting not only the neurological processes that govern individual behavior but also the broader social environment. A portion of the illegal drug production from remote areas in developing nations often gets diverted from its intended consumers to local individuals. Frequently, the local populace serves as a consistent consumer base for this illicit production. The line between producer and consumer countries is becoming increasingly blurred, as it is now recognized that consumption poses a significant challenge in producer nations as well. For instance, Myanmar, one of the largest opium producers, has seen a consistent rise in opium and heroin abuse since 1970. Similarly, in Afghanistan, another major producer, the area dedicated to opium poppy cultivation expanded in 1992, although the levels of consumption and addiction remain unclear. In Pakistan, there are approximately 650,000 heroin users, with no signs of a decline in these numbers.

For centuries, indigenous communities in the Andes have chewed coca leaves. This plant is mainly cultivated in Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru, with Peru being the largest producer. Among the youth in Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru, smoking coca paste—often combined with tobacco or cannabis (known as basuco or pitillo)—has become increasingly common. Cocaine, the primary psychoactive component of the coca leaf, is extracted from the leaves and used to produce various forms of the drug, including coca paste and crack. The United States represents the largest single market for cocaine, experiencing significant growth in usage during the 1980s. The media extensively covered deaths and injuries associated with cocaine, and a high percentage of those arrested tested positive for its use. The immense profits generated by the cocaine trade have led to the establishment of new production hubs,

expansion into additional markets, and infiltration into legitimate businesses and political entities in several countries. The addictive properties of cocaine can result in a rapid increase in usage frequency, quantity consumed, or concurrent use with other substances. Cocaine addiction has placed a substantial strain on communities across many nations, often overwhelming welfare, treatment, and law enforcement systems.

References for further reading

1. LaMond Tullis, *Illegal Drugs in Nine Countries: Socioeconomic and Political Consequences*, Draft report prepared for UNRISD at Geneva and the United Nations University at Tokyo, 23 December 1993.
2. United States Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics Matters, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, Executive Summary, April 1994.
3. World Bank, *The World Bank Atlas 1994*, Washington, D.C., 1994.
4. LaMond Tullis, *Handbook of Research on the Illicit Drug Traffic: Socioeconomic and Political Consequences* (New York, N.Y., Greenwood Press, 1991).
5. United Nations, "Women and drug abuse: a position paper by the United Nations", 11 February 1994.
6. Peter Reuter, "Can the borders be sealed?", article from Peter Reuter, Gordon Crawford and Jonathan Cave, *Sealing the Border* (Santa Monica, California, the Rand Corporation, 1988).
7. United Nations, "Report of the United Nations Secretariat. Drug abuse: extent, patterns and trends", Prepared for the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, thirty-seventh session, Vienna, 13-22 April 1994. (E/CN.7/1994/4, 21)
8. "Report of the United Nations Secretariat. Drug abuse: extent, patterns and trends", Prepared for the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Thirty-sixth Session, Vienna, 29 March-7 April 1993 (E/CN 7/1993/4).

