Stephen Giang

Prof. Kaluzhski

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Research Paper

The epidemic on opioids across the world has reached an entirely new scale, and studies are showing us just the reason for it. Governments and the way they help their citizens is a major factor in the huge drug crisis. As money and power become more of a struggle into today’s society, we can see the progression of addiction to drugs correlate directly with the economic status of a government.

With the advancements of science and medicine, it makes people question the benefits and drawbacks of such progressions. Although advancements in medicine have done so much beneficial things, such as many cures for multiple diseases, they also open the door for negative implications of such medicines. For example, opioids and narcotics are used to ease pain and stress throughout the body, but an overuse in it can enhance the pain instead of reduce it. These medicines come with their own upsides and downsides. The drawbacks heavily outweigh the benefits when the medicines are not used as directed. The downsides include a heavy reliance and addiction, physical damage on the body and brain, and a downward spiral of financial issues. These addictive drugs and the huge dependency on them create terrible situations for most users. With such advancement in science, people are waiting for a solution to stop addiction.

In Aldous Huxley’s novel, *Brave New World*, he embeds an idea that the drug soma, the *perfect drug*, is a tool by the government to blind them of their own enslavement. Soma is a drug that would be used to escape displeasing feelings and replace it with an enhanced joy and overall sense of well being. This drug hid the natural unjust feeling of oppression without free will. Huxley uses his futuristic novel as a satire to talk about what’s wrong with the present society. He conveys the point that the government is directly influencing the use of drugs in a nation.

In today’s time, society is getting more and more addicted towards drugs. As of 2016, there were over 275 million consumers of illicit drugs in that year. This is an almost a 52 percent increase from what it was in 1990. In 2016, the number of people who died of drug overdoses exceeded the 58,000 soldier casualties of the Vietnam War by a stacking 7,000 deaths. In 1972, there were more than 55,000 deaths by car crashes. In the early 1990’s, there were 43,000 deaths by HIV, and 40,000 deaths by guns. Scientists make drugs todays more addictive than ever before for the prospect of money and power. Drug overdoses are at an all-time high because the reliance of drugs keeps increasing as age of science keeps progressing.

Despite opioids and narcotics being very useful in reducing patient’s pains and used in many medical practices, an overuse of them can become very dangerous. Illicit drugs are illegal outside of medical practices because without the right medical knowledge on what a reasonable amount of pain killers is, over usage can be easily achieved. People overuse drugs because pain killers reduce less pain the more you use it. So by overusing it, a user can reduce the same amount of pain prior to overusing it. The dangers of overusing drugs can include nausea, sedation, breathing interruptions, abnormal heart beats, and death in most cases. Another danger that many people put themselves under while using opioids is mixing it with other drugs. When combining multiple drugs together, they can react unknowingly and can cause major side effects that need immediate medical attention. Misusing drugs comes with many dangers and only lead to a hole with no end.

Addiction towards drugs not only affects the user, but affects everyone around them. Families are torn apart because of financial issues from wasting money on more drugs. The addict also can become uninterested in previous activities shared in the family. Drug addicts also tend to destroy trust in relationships as they hide their addiction and become dishonest about their habits. Drug abuse in the presence of impressionable children can also shape the future of them. Children whose parents did drugs tended to do drugs when they grew into adolescence than kids whose parents didn’t do drugs. Drug abuse not only has dangers towards the user but also the surrounding friends and family.

Drug addiction can be explained through chemical process in the brain. Drugs, opioids in specific, control three particular parts of the brain that leads to addiction. The brain works by sending neurons to different parts of the body to control every aspect of it. Drugs mimics as a neurotransmitter and create abnormal messages through your brain to control how you are feeling. This can create a drug high or amplify certain communications between neurons such as the one to produce dopamine.

The basal ganglion creates a reward circuit that gives the body dopamine, or the pleasure chemical. When there is exposure to drugs, the basal ganglia activates an enhanced reward circuit to give off a euphoric high. When there is repeated and constant exposure to drugs that set off the basal ganglia, it becomes less sensitive, meaning the host’s body would need to be doing drugs more often to feel the same high. This is where the reliance of drugs to feel happy and pleasurable is embedded on first time drug users. Their brains can no longer feel that high without a repeated use of these drugs. This leads them to a conclusion of over using the drugs to keep being happy and feeling that desirable high.

The extended amygdala works the other way than the basal ganglia. The extended amygdala controls stress and anxiety part of the brain. And with more drugs, the amygdala becomes more sensitive making the user have intense stress, anxiety, and withdrawal feelings when they are without it. The reliance of drugs comes from the constant feeling of stress and anxiety. From doing drugs, their body is always stressed and anxious, so they do more drugs to get rid of this loathing feeling. This is where they get caught in an endless loop of dependency on drugs.

The prefrontal cortex is the part of the brain that helps one think, and make logical decisions. When drugs affect the prefrontal cortex, the users cannot make logical decisions. This makes it harder for them to escape the endless loop of drugs and the addiction. The prefrontal cortex on drugs is the direct cause as to how drugs become so addictive and create such a great dependency in societal lives.

These parts of the brain control the aspect of the addiction, but for an addiction to start there must be a beginning. According to Drug Cove Recovery, common cases as to why people try drugs to start is because “psychological stress of not having a job is more powerful than reduced or no income.” Financial stress is one of the biggest causes of drug use in America, according to Summit Behavioral Health. Financial stress is greatly linked towards the health of the economy within a government.

When an economy is not meeting basic standards, the citizens are the ones affected. Certain circumstances in which an economy can be labeled as unhealthy are high unemployment rates, low GDP rates, and lesser entitlement benefits. What this means is that when citizens are caught in a wave of economic crises, they cannot produce enough money to pay for the basic necessities of daily life. These stressful situations lead people towards stress relieving drugs like opioids and narcotics to ease the pressure of financial distress. The failing economy leads their citizens to fall into an endless cycle of drugs.

Direct countries have shown a direct correlation of drugs with their economic collapse. Based on studies of Columbia, with the Columbian government barely able to provide any of its citizen’s basic public services, the drug use and production has taken control of the majority of the country. The Columbian economy has collapsed and become unable to provide their citizens basic road repair, health care, and well-defined, institutionalized public rights. Their citizens are caught into a huge economic crisis, while the drug companies within the same country are worth over ten billion dollars. The drug companies created a business based off the financial stress of all the inhabitants of the country.

Other countries are rapidly growing in the drug scene as well. Countries such as Venezuela are in a huge economic runt themselves. From the year 2015, the country is: down 61% on food exports, the maternal mortality is up 76%, the infant mortality rate is up 30%, and the cases of malaria is at a 76% increase. With the economy failing, the drug companies, however, are rising faster to power alongside their neighbor, Columbia. The country is becoming one of the biggest spots for drug companies, as the economy degrades even faster.

Racially discriminated communities have been shown to be poorer than socially accepted communities. A study in 2015 shows that Hispanics make 31% less than the average white male. Another study surveying over 1,690 Hispanics, 8.2 percent of them have reported of using illicit drugs. These rates are still higher than the rate of how many white males do drugs. Due to minorities’ financial status and wage gap between other ethnic groups, they have a higher rate of doing drugs than financially stable groups. The constant fear of financial issues push people of lesser backgrounds towards drugs due to the increased stress and anxiety.

Many countries are fighting the drug war in hope to improve the economy. In doing so, governments are ignoring the fact that there is work that needs to be done for the citizens. Most of the money of the countries is going towards fighting the war on drugs. Fighting in the war is only making the economy worse with all the resources needed to fight it in the first place. By wasting money on the fighting the war, with the hope of increasing money for the country, the war will never be in favor of a prospering nation.

There is also a positive correlation between a good economy and lesser drug use. Switzerland, for example, has had the world’s best economy since 2011, according to a 24/7 Wall Street article. Switzerland implemented a new drug policy in 2010. They offered free methadone and clean needles to any addicts, which in effect, lowered the crime and death rates substantially. Switzerland had a booming economy, so the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health implemented a vision of achieving three goals: “reducing the consumption of drugs, the negative consequences for drug users, and the negative consequences for society as a whole.” Along with the vision, they based their drug policy on the four pillar model: "Prevention helps to reduce drug consumption by making it harder to start using drugs and by preventing the development of addiction. Therapy helps to reduce drug consumption by enabling users to break free of their dependency and to stay free of it, or at least by keeping this option open to them. In addition it promotes the social integration of those under treatment and helps to improve their health. Harm reduction helps to reduce the negative consequences of drug use on the consumer and indirectly on society as well, by providing individually tailored and socially less problematic ways of consuming drugs. Law enforcement uses appropriate regulatory measures to implement the prohibition of illegal drugs, thus helping to reduce the negative consequences of drug taking for society as a whole." With one of the world’s greatest economy, the war on drugs seems to be an issue of the past.

People with addiction become hooked onto drugs and stay that way is because they are unable to find the right help they need. When people seek help from their drug addiction, they are preyed upon by big corporate health organizations. This is where they receive help, but at a huge cost financially. In this situation, people may stop treatment because it’s too expensive, or keep doing drugs to ease the stress of paying for treatments. The big corporate health organizations are simply looking for capital gain upon these addicts, which only worsens the drug-user’s financial issues. Rehabilitation centers can range from 12,000 to 60,000 dollars on a simple 60-90 day programs for inpatient help. Drug users already facing financial issues along with their drug issues cannot afford that type of price for the help they desperately need.

The problem society faces towards rehabilitation is the direction in which we face addiction. We deal with addiction by its symptoms. When someone is looking for help to become drug-free, doctors prescribe give them pills to ease the stress and manage the depression. Doctors also look to help with the symptoms of doing the drugs. Drugs can come with many physical issues, in which doctors try their best to manage. Drugs that can give lung and heart damage are managed by many procedures and medications to prolong the user’s life. However, despite many efforts towards rehabilitation, many users fall back to drugs in the future, restarting the issue. What many experts seem to miss is the way we try to make sure drug users don’t fall back to their unhealthy habits.

What other experts are suggesting is that to deal with drug addiction, the economy needs to attack the root of the problem, the causes. Drug users go back to drugs because their causes for taking the drugs don’t go away. When a person gets off drugs, they fall back to them because they still have the financial stress due to their helpless economy. Instead of treating the symptoms, a dramatic way to decrease drug use is by fixing the economy so people will have one less reason to do them in the first place. In a three year study (2005-2008), 38.8% of drug users said that they were not ready to stop doing drugs. The reason at which someone would not be ready to stop is because the reason behind it is still a major issue. An expert way to rid a problem is by ridding the cause.

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Outline

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