

ECOSOC Resolution 2005/25

Treatment of pain using opioid analgesics

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling its resolutions 1995/19 of 24 July 1995, 1996/19 of 23 July 1996, 1997/38 of 21 July 1997, 1998/25 of 28 July 1998, 1999/33 of 28 July 1999, 2000/18 of 27 July 2000, 2001/17 of 24 July 2001, 2002/20 of 24 July 2002, 2003/40 of 22 July 2003 and 2004/43 of 21 July 2004, in which it reiterated the importance of medically appropriate use of opiates in pain relief therapy as advocated by the World Health Organization,

Bearing in mind the report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 1999,¹ especially its chapter I, “Freedom from pain and suffering”, in which the Board reminded all Governments that the medical use of narcotic drugs continued to be indispensable for the relief of pain and suffering and that adequate provision must be made to ensure the availability of narcotic drugs for such purposes,

Recalling the document entitled “Achieving balance in national opioids control policy: guidelines for assessment”,² prepared in 2000 by the World Health Organization in consultation with the International Narcotics Control Board to help Governments to achieve better pain management by identifying and overcoming the barriers to opioid availability, in which it was emphasized that opioids such as morphine were the drugs of choice in the treatment of severe pain and that they should be available at all times in adequate amounts and in the appropriate dosage forms to satisfy the health-care needs of the majority of the population,

Recalling also that, in May 2004, the Executive Board of the World Health Organization recommended for adoption by the Fifty-eighth World Health Assembly, to be held in May 2005, a draft resolution on cancer prevention and control, in which the Assembly would urge member States to ensure the medical availability of opioid analgesics according to international treaties and recommendations of the World Health Organization and the International Narcotics Control Board and subject to an efficient monitoring and control system,

Welcoming the fact that the World Health Organization is developing a strategy to integrate the availability of opioid pain medication into palliative care for HIV/AIDS, cancer and other chronic diseases,

Calling attention to the assessment of the International Narcotics Control Board in its report for 2004 according to which low consumption of opioid analgesics for the treatment of moderate to severe pain, especially in developing countries, continued to be a matter of great concern to the Board,³

¹ *Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 1999* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.00.XI.1).

² WHO/EDM/QSM/2000.4.

³ *Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2004* (United Nations

Noting, on the basis of that report, the disparities in the consumption of such medicines existing between developing and developed countries, and recalling that, in 2003, six countries together accounted for 79 per cent of global consumption of morphine, while developing countries, representing about 80 per cent of the world's population, accounted for only about 6 per cent of global consumption of morphine,

Bearing in mind that, in its report for 2004, the International Narcotics Control Board encouraged Member States that had not yet done so to examine the extent to which their health-care systems and laws and regulations permitted the use of opioids for medical purposes, to identify possible impediments to such use and develop plans of action for the development of long-term pain management strategies, with a view to facilitating the supply and availability of narcotic drugs for all appropriate indications,⁴

Recalling that, in its report for 1999, the International Narcotics Control Board stated that the development of a new, non-profit mechanism for the use of otherwise unused narcotic products should be considered⁵ and observed that the impediments to opioid availability that were frequently reported by government authorities were impediments originating in the regulatory and drug control system, medical/therapeutic impediments, economic impediments and social and cultural impediments,⁶

1. *Recognizes* the importance of improving the treatment of pain, including by the use of opioid analgesics, as advocated by the World Health Organization, especially in developing countries, and calls upon Member States to remove barriers to the medical use of such analgesics, taking fully into account the need to prevent their diversion for illicit use;

2. *Invites* the International Narcotics Control Board and the World Health Organization to examine the feasibility of a possible assistance mechanism that would facilitate the adequate treatment of pain using opioid analgesics and to inform the Commission on Narcotic Drugs at its forty-ninth session of the results of that examination;

3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to transmit the text of the present resolution to all Member States for their consideration and implementation and to report on the implementation of the resolution to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs at its forty-ninth session.

*36th plenary meeting
22 July 2005*

publication, Sales No. E.05.XI.3), para. 143.

⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 197.

⁵ *Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 1999* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.00.XI.1), para. 45.

⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 30.