

In Chapter 7, Katrina Champion, Nicola Newton, Louise Birrell and Maree Teesson provide an overview of **primary prevention** activities, particularly in relation to halting or delaying the onset of drug use among adolescents and preventing related harms. They provide a rationale for primary prevention, outline the evidence about when prevention should be delivered for optimal benefit, and summarise the different settings for intervention delivery, including schools, media, **primary care**, community, and the family. They discuss the early findings for internet-based interventions for students and their parents.

In Chapter 8, Craig Rodgers and Ingrid van Beek discuss harm reduction: interventions designed to reduce the adverse health, social and economic consequences of drug use without necessarily reducing drug consumption. They provide an overview of strategies and the associated evidence base for **needle and syringe programs**, **supervised injecting facilities** and **opioid maintenance therapy**, and cover strategies to address both legal and illegal drugs. The authors go on to consider where harm reduction approaches fit in an ongoing debate between prohibition and legalisation and the many positions in between.

In Chapter 9, Suzanne Nielsen and Natasa Gisev outline key drug **pharmacology** processes, noting the complex neurochemical structures, proteins and **receptor** systems that underpin the biological basis of psychoactive drugs. This chapter also covers the use of medications to treat drug use disorders (known as pharmacotherapy treatments). Pharmacotherapy for both withdrawal and dependence is discussed in detail.

In Chapter 10, Nicole Lee and Amanda Baker provide an overview of psychosocial treatments for those who have experienced harms or developed dependence. This chapter takes a clinical perspective and considers what is known of ‘evidence-based practice’. They examine a range of interventions from non-clinical interventions (such as **case management**) to **low intensity interventions** and briefer treatments to intensive clinical interventions. Settings include residential and non-residential. They look beyond the treatments themselves to look at how utilising a **stepped care** model, developing a sound formulation, therapist effects and good supervision can facilitate treatment outcomes.

In Chapter 11, David McDonald and Caitlin Hughes consider drug laws and those regulations, and challenge us to reflect on why governments choose to legislate to control some drugs and not others, when it is apparent that these decisions are not based on the potential for harm. The international treaties that form the basis for Australian drug laws are described, as well as our current drug laws and law enforcement patterns. Although important and beneficial incremental changes to drug laws have been implemented across Australia in recent decades, drug law reform advocates are calling for a broader reconsideration of the prohibition policy that underlies the way we deal with illegal drugs.

In Chapter 12, Lorraine Mazerolle and Jenna Thompson focus on the enforcement of illicit drug laws through strategies such as policing, border control and customs agency controls. These strategies are designed primarily to prevent, disrupt or reduce the production and supply of drugs. The authors describe various policing approaches including standard, unfocused,

community-wide policing; more strategic **hot spots policing** in areas where crime is concentrated; and **problem-oriented policing** where the problem may be people or places and police responses are typically provided in partnership with other community organisations.

In the final chapter, Chapter 13, Alison Ritter and Kari Lancaster discuss drug policy: how we understand the term and the different policy theories and strategies. Where research evidence fits in **policy processes** that are typically influenced by many other factors is explored. The authors describe the policy process as complex and ‘messy’, with a wide range of vested interests working to exert influence on policy processes. Given that drugs are a complex, multi-determined social problem, the authors argue that official drug policy cannot ‘solve’ the problem of drug use and related harms. But they argue that better research evidence and improved understanding of policy processes can lead to better drug policy.

The editors hope that this book highlights some of the complexities associated with psychoactive drug use and the challenges that societies face balancing benefits and harms; freedoms and controls; and intended and unintended policy outcomes. We urge readers to question assumptions about drug use and how we respond, and more specifically to ask to what extent these assumptions and responses are based on good quality evidence.

Discussion questions

- Where do you sit with a focus on drug *use* versus a focus on *harms*? How do your views about drugs influence which measures you would support in both public health policy and clinical practice?
- How do different terms create more or less stigma about drug use and the people who use drugs? What are the possible impacts of stigma on the people who use drugs, their families and the general community?
- Think about the balance between public safety and civil liberties in the application of alcohol policy. Which side do you lean towards? Would you place public safety over civil liberties or vice versa?
- The balance between availability and harm is an important consideration for policy makers. Can you identify the ways in which alcohol is available in Australia today, and how this availability influences harms?

Further reading

- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2014). *National Drug Strategy Household Survey Detailed Report 2013* (Vol. AIHW cat. no. PHE183). Canberra: Author.
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2016). *Australia's Health 2016*. Australia's Health No. 15. Catalogue No. AUS 199. Canberra: Author.
- Muller, C., & Schumann, G. (2011). Drugs as instruments: A new framework for non-addictive psychoactive drug use. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 34, 293–347.

National Health and Medical Research Council. (2009). *Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol*. Canberra: Author.

Race, K. (2009). *Pleasure Consuming Medicine: The Queer Politics of Drugs*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Useful websites

Australian Government National Drug Strategy: <http://www.nationaldrugstrategy.gov.au>

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare: <http://www.aihw.gov.au>

European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction: <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu>

Lowitja Institute: <http://www.lowitja.org.au>