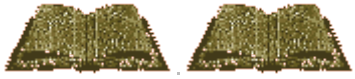
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[Technical Books Section] Pages: |1| 2| 3| 4| 5| 6| 7| 8| 9| 10| 11| 12| 13| 14| 15| 16| 17| 18| 19| 20| 21| 22| 23|
[Popular Books Section] Pages: |1| 2| 3| 4| 5| 6| 7| 8| 9|

[Animated Reviews] Pages: |1| [Software/Multimedia] Pages: |1|2|

REVIEWS IN THE PREVIOUS ISSUE | NEXT ISSUE

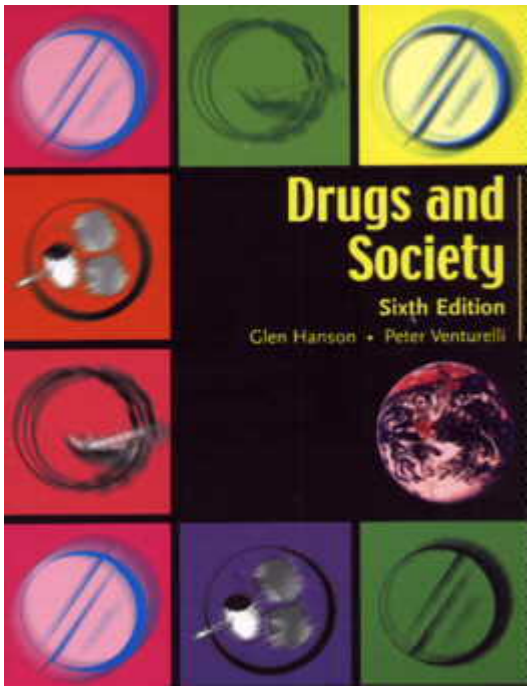
Editor's recommendation. This book is recommended by the editor.

DRUG ABUSE WELL EXPLAINED

Drugs and Society *6th Edition, 2001 by* Glen Hanson and Peter Venturelli
Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 40 Tall Pine Drive, Sudbury, MA 01776, USA. : : xii + 530 Pages: ISBN 0-7637-1391-0: Price $61.95

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Narcotic drugs is a much discussed topic today. Frequently we get to read about narcotic drugs being seized by custom officials at airports. More and more youngsters are coming into its grips. Today we face the twin problems of drug trafficking and drug abuse on a much larger scale than at any time in the past. Although drug problem is a global problem, certain countries such as India are especially prone to it. India's geographic location between the major illicit supply areas of the world makes it very vulnerable to drug problem. Sandwiched between South-East Asia (known as the 'Golden Triangle') and the near and Middle East (the `Golden Crescent'), which are the two great hubs of illicit drug trafficking, India has emerged as a major transit country for the smuggling of drugs.

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A full listing of the Contents of the 6th Edition of *Drugs and Society*

Table of contents

1. Introduction to Drugs and Society
2. Explaining Drug Use and Abuse
3. Drug Use and the Law
4. Addictive behavior and Treating Drug Dependence
5. How and Why Drugs Work
6. Homeostatic Systems and Drugs
7. CNS Depressants: Sedative-Hypnotics
8. Alcohol (Ethanol): Pharmacological Effects
9. Alcohol: A behavioral Perspective
10.Narcotics (Opioids)
11.Stimulants
12.Tobacco
13.Hallucinogens (Psychedelics)
14.Marijuana
15.Inhalants
16.Over-the-Counter (OTC) and Prescription Drugs

17.Drug Use within Subcultures
18.Drug Abuse Prevention

Totally unaware of the ill-effects of these drugs, most youngsters take to these merely out of curiosity. Curiosity kills the cat, goes an old proverb and something similar happens here. Like the proverbial fish which nibbled at every bait, the youngster is caught inexorably in the clutches of these drugs. Will it not be better if their curiosity could be satisfied in a more constructive way? What are these drugs? What are their effects on our body? How do they damage our body? What is so peculiar about these drugs that they entrap a person like a mousetrap entraps the mouse? How can we stay free of these drugs? The book under review attempts to uncover these facts. Most of the drugs have a curious history. Strange myths, legends and folklore surround many of the drugs which have created a mysterious aura around them. An attempt is made to penetrate these thick mists and find out the truth. In our search for the truth we will often make distant journeys into strange and amazing lands where these drugs practices arose. Above all, these drugs will be seen in the modern scientific light. Thus while making the narrative interesting and somewhat adventurous, hard scientific facts have been given to enlighten the public at large and particularly our youngsters who are so curious to know more about drugs.

Peer Influence. In adolescent groups, the spread of drug abuse usually involves drug/alcohol abuse (from page 93 of the book)



The chapters include topics as diverse as "drugs and the law", narcotics, opioids, stimulants, tobacco, marijuana and tobacco. Meanings of various terminologies are well explained. What do we mean by a narcotic drug? A narcotic drug, when referred to by a medical man, means any drug that benumbs the body and produces sleep. The term is derived from the Greek word *narkotikos* meaning `a benumbing', which in turn comes from the Greek word *narke* used for designating `numbness', stupor or `torpor'. Narcotic drugs are peculiar and different to other drugs in the sense that when a legal or law enforcement official refers to them, he means something entirely different. The books tells us how this happens.

Drugs are not always medicinal. A non-medicinal drug is a drug used when no health or medical need exists. Examples of non-medicinal drugs are alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and cocaine. Most

non-medicinal drugs are mind-altering drugs. These drugs reach the brain cells and change the chemical reactions within. By doing so, they effect the way people think, feel, speak and move about.

The book makes the text lighter by showing cartoons at several places. This Famous Cartoon (from page 230 of the book) shows a British sailor shoving opium down the throat of a Chinese man, which dates back to the Opium War of 1839-1842



Mind-altering drugs can affect the brain in three major ways: they can speed up its working (stimulants or `uppers'), slow down its working (depressants or `downers')or may put the brain machinery completely out of gear (hallucinogens). A *hallucinogen* is a drug that causes a person to hallucinate, that is, to see, feel, or hear things that do not exist. For instance, after taking LSD, a person might see some elephant-sized cockroaches coming towards him, when actually there is no such thing. A person addicted to cocaine over a long period may feel bugs crawling over his body without anything being there.

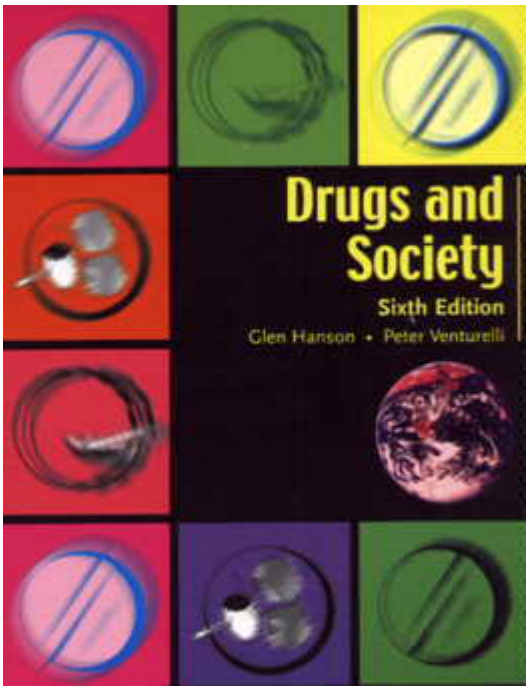
All mind-altering drugs are addictive in nature. They change the working of the body in such a way that after some time the body starts `demanding' them. If the drug is not taken, the person becomes lethargic, listless and feels restless. The moment the drug is given to him, be starts feeling energetic again, only to feel listless again after some time. In other words, he becomes an addict. An *addict* is a person who needs his daily quota of drugs even if it involves stealing or perhaps resorting to graver crimes such as murder. An addict soon becomes a curse not only to himself but to the whole society as well.

A peculiar fact about addictive drugs is that the user needs to increase each subsequent dose of the drug to get the same effect once felt with a smaller amount taken previously. This is called *tolerance*. Thus very soon the requirement of an addict `outgrows' his means and he has to resort to unlawful means. Sometimes tolerance to one drug may automatically produce tolerance to a similar drug although the addict may never have taken that drug. This is known as *cross-tolerance*. For instance, tolerance to morphine (a drug of addiction) will automatically produce tolerance to pethidine (another drug of addiction quite similar to morphine).

QUICK NOTES

Some major highlights of *Drugs and Society* at a glance:

- Learn how drug use and abuse affects you and society



- Richly illustrated with color diagrams and photographs all through
- Abundant use of lighter material such as cartoons to illutrate important points
- Several helpful learnign aids such as *Exercises for the web, Highlighted Definitions, Learning Objectives, Summary statements* and many more
- Provocative questions at the end of each chapter
- Boxes entitled *Fighting the Drug war* are valuable vignettes intended to help the readers assess governmental efforts to deal with drug-related problems.
- Four useful appendices

No one takes to drugs to become an addict. Why, then, does anyone ever become an addict? One of the reasons is the false belief that a drug user can recognize when addiction is developing and stop using the drug in time. This never happens because of a vicious cycle which these drugs set up in the body. When mind-altering drugs first reach the brain, the user experiences a feeling that he or she likes. But then the rebound effect occurs as the effect of the drug starts wearing off. A *rebound effect* is an unpleasant effect quite contrary to the original effect of a drug. A person taking amphetamine, a stimulant, may at first feel energetic, but the effect soon wears off and the person experiences tiredness as a rebound effect. This is followed by a feeling of irritation and depression. When the rebound effect occurs, the user, in order to overcome the effect, takes the drug again. This sets up a vicious circle from which the person can never come out. Very soon the mind-altering drugs throw the brain's chemistry out of balance with the result that the user's brain begins to need the drugs.

The "refreshing" element in Vin Mariani was coca extract. This is a famous poster illustrating the tonic effects of Vin Mariani (from page 230 of the book). Illustrations such as these make the text very light and interesting.



A very good analogy exists in the world of bacteria. There are several bacteria who are sensitive to the drug streptomycin. If a drop of streptomycin is instilled in their colonies, they soon die. But if these bacteria are grown in the presence of very small quantities of streptomycin, very soon new forms appear which begin to need streptomycin for their growth. In fact these bacteria become `streptomycin dependent' and if this antibiotic (which was meant to kill them originally) is not supplied to them, most bacteria die for want of it.

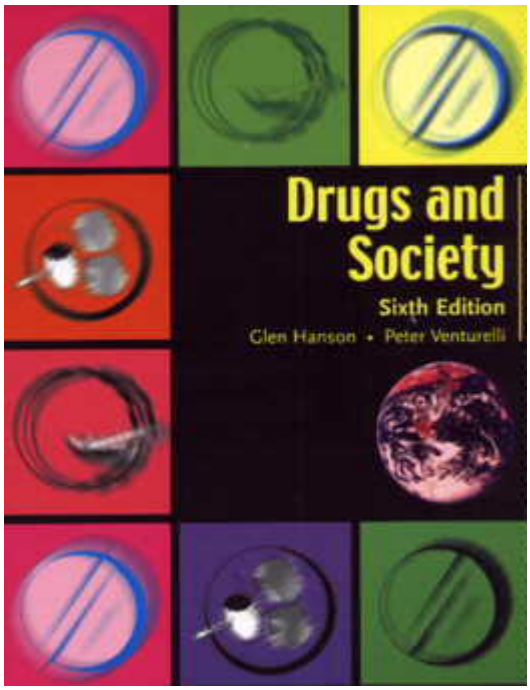
The chapter on opioids is very interesting, and includes some hilarious cartoons to make the text lighter (For one such cartoon, see above and to the right). Opium or *afim* (as it is known in vernacular in India) can rightly be called the `king of narcotics'. Perhaps no other narcotic enjoys so much popularity as opium. Strong addictive drugs such as heroin are synthesized from it. A person addicted to opium could go to any length to produce it. He could commit theft, robbery or murder to acquire money to buy opium or the related drug, heroin. This is one of the major reasons why opium and related drugs are banned for non-medical use in many countries.

Raw opium is dark brown in color and is a soft gummy mass having a strong characteristic odor and bitter taste. On eating it gives rise to a feeling of well being. In small doses, say of about 50 mg, it gives rise to pleasant sensations; however, in large doses it induces sleep. Still larger doses, say about 2 gm, are liable to kill a person.

One of the most romantic drugs of abuse is undoubtedly cocaine. It has been used by such legendary characters as Sherlock Holmes (fictional) and Sigmund Freud. "Cocaine isn't habit forming. I should know, I've been taking it for years," said Tallulah Bankhead (1903-68), the famous American actress. This ironical statement, more than anything else, demonstrates how enslaving cocaine can be.

This book gives us important information about cocaine. Its habit has been compared to a person being gradually enclosed in the coils of a serpent, that slowly winds itself round the body with increasing pressure, to the terror of its victim, ultimately leading to death. Seldom is there any permanent breaking of the coil, once it starts.

Cocaine is the recreational drug of choice today, especially in America. The use of cocaine has permeated into the powerful and socially prominent circles. Of all the drugs cocaine is considered the largest producer of illicit income in the United States today.



This book integrates the sociological, biomedical and social-psychological perspectives of drug abuse problems in an engaging and interactive style. There is a complete new chapter on inhalants in this brand new sixth edition. There is latest information on drugs such as Ecstasy. In addition most up-to-date legislation relating to drugs has been discussed!

What about hallucinogens? These are the drugs which produce hallucinations in the taker. These drugs of which LSD is the most typical, are liable to change ways in which people sense and understand their surroundings, sensations especially of colors become more intense, distorted or surrealistic. Users say they 'see' sounds or smells and 'hear' sights. Ordinarily objects seem to pulsate with life. There may be complete hallucinations.

LSD or lysergic acid diethylamide belongs to the group of drugs known as hallucinogens. These drugs alter the user's mood or perception. Hallucinogens derive their name from the Latin *alucinari* meaning 'to wander in mind'. These drugs are known by several different names, such as psychotomimetic, psychedelic, illusionogenic or mysticomimetic drugs. Some prefer to refer to them as mind-expanding drugs.

The mental and psychological effects of hallucinogens are quite different to those of drugs we have already discussed. One of the typical effects is creation of vivid pictures in the mind of the user. Sleep is almost impossible until at least eight or ten hours after use. A feeling of panic is a common complaint. The face gets flushed and there is generalized trembling or excitement in the body. The book explains very well the effects of LSD.

Snorting cocaine causes substantial stimulation often followed by a rebound depression (from page 269 of the book).



One of the hallucinogens that has been very well described in this book is PCP. PCP or phencyclidine has recently leaped into the forefront of the drug scene and is a veterinary anesthetic. The name PCP is an acronym of the chemical name for the drug phencyclohexyl-piperidine, and from this acronym has sprung up a highly imaginative slang term `peace pill'. It is also known by numerous other exotic names, like 'angel dust',' embalming fluid', 'gorilla biscuits', 'magic mist' and 'rocket fuel'. Though first discovered in 1926, its anesthetic potential was realized as late as in 1957. In 1958 phencyclidine was marketed as a general anesthetic for experimental use on humans. Observing the serenity the drug produced in monkeys, the manufacturer Parke-Davis & Co. chose the trade name Sernyl. Most general anesthetics produce respiratory depression, thus forcing anesthetists to assist respiration during anesthesia. Sernyl did not have this drawback and was thus widely promoted for its lack of respiratory depression. But in 1956, human use had to be discontinued because of some adverse effects caused by Sernyl. These included unpleasant sensations, delirium, extreme agitation, hallucinations and loss of the sense of time and space. About one in very five patients experienced these symptoms, which persisted for eighteen hours. The effects produced by Sernyl resembled those seen in mental disorders, and thus Sernyl began to be used to produce model psychoses for psychiatric investigations.

In 1967, phencyclidine was reintroduced as Sernylan (addition of 'an' after the original name) for use as a veterinary anesthetic. That same year, the drug made its debut on the streets of San Francisco. It was then that it began to be called the 'peace pill'. Unlike heroin, PCP was orally ingested. The after-effects of PCP were quite unpredictable. Because of its unpredictability and also because of frequent overdoses, the 'peace pill' vanished from the illicit drug scene of the San Francisco Bay area in less than a year. Shortly thereafter, it reappeared on the east coast of USA as 'hog', but there also its street life was transient.

LSD Blotter paper. Small amounts of LSD are added to decorated, absorbent paper. Each small square represents a single dose to be chewed or swallowed. The designs on the paper have no drug function, and usually depict some famous character, such as Tintin here (from page 343 of the book).



In early 1970, phencyclidine resurfaced again on the streets, this time as a drug of deceit. Since it was easily and cheaply synthesized in clandestine 'kitchen' laboratories without the risk of illegal importation, it was frequently substituted for and sold on the street as some other narcotic such as THC (see Chapter 5), Mescaline, Psilocybin, LSD, amphetamine, cocaine, etc. In fact, it was seen that only 30 per cent of sheet drug samples that contained PCP were sold as PCP. THC, which actually is not available on the street, was the most frequent misrepresentation.

By mid-1970, PCP abuse had reached epidemic proportions. One estimate was that in the US alone some seven million people had used PCP on an occasional basis and that one million used it at least once a week. PCP became the drug of choice for many addicts particularly for teenagers in the age of fourteen. Recent trends however indicate that PCP abuse has lessened over the years.

I could go on and on, but perhaps you would do well to purchase this book and read it. This book has been able to project the adverse effects of narcotic drugs in a proper perspective so as to refrain our youngsters from falling prey to them. It is written in a popular style, so everyone can buy and enjoy it. The authors have combined their expertise in the fields of drug abuse, pharmacology and sociology with their extensive experiences in research, teaching, and drug-policy implementation to improve this sixth edition over the previous five versions of this book. It is studded with good quality color photographs, which are very informative and illustrative, and make the text lighter. We have attempted to reproduce some photographs here for the benefit of the reader so that he gets an idea what we are talking about. Fully recommended to every intelligent individual who wants to learn more about these drugs.

Order *Drugs and Society* by Clicking here

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