

# WHO treatment guidelines on pain: processes, status, challenges

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World Health  
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# Scope of the presentation

Lack of access to opioid analgesics

Access to Controlled Medications Program (ACMP)

The need for WHO pain guidelines

WHO process for developing treatment guidelines

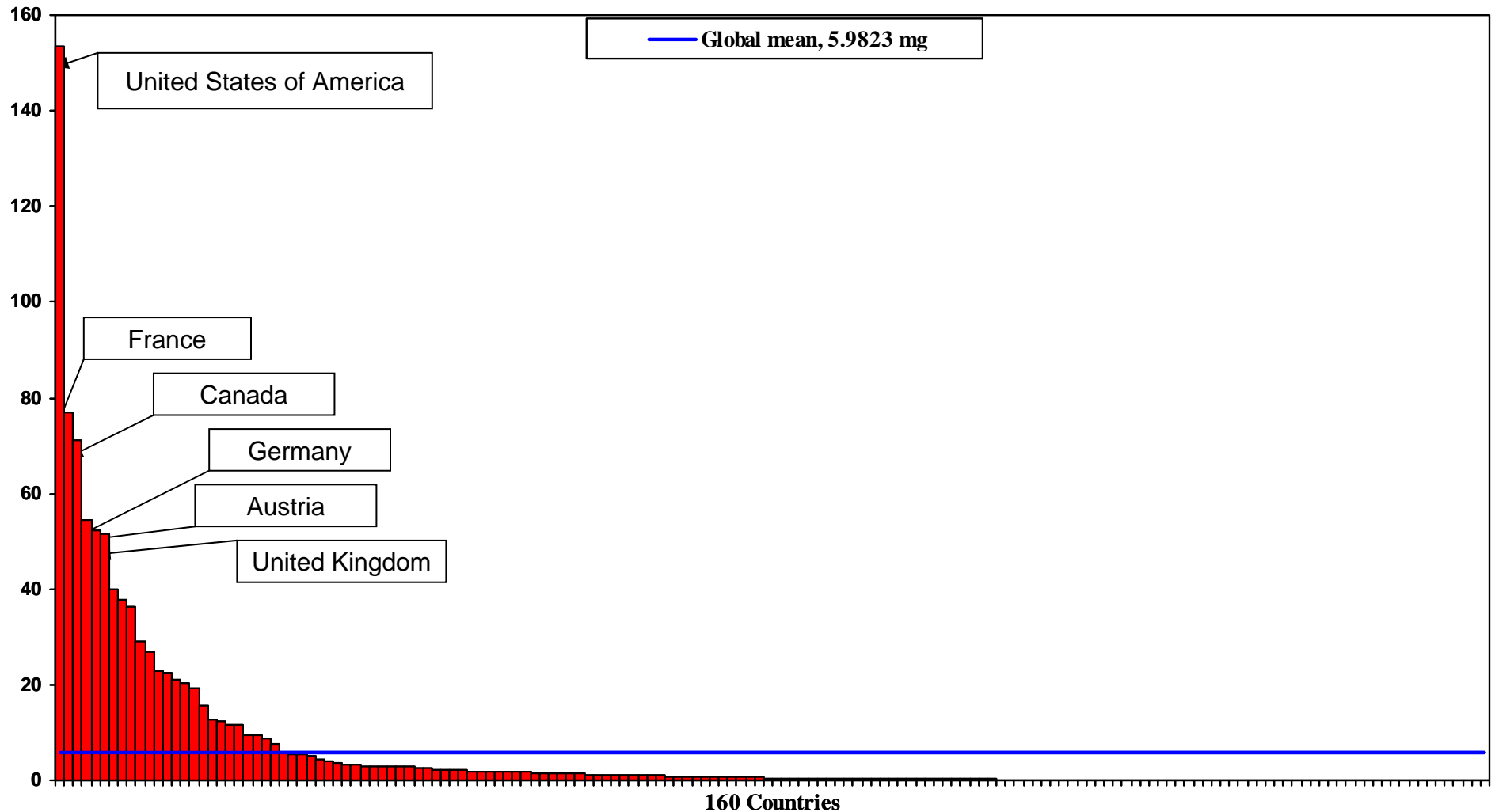
- Evidence retrieval, assessment and synthesis

- Formulating recommendations

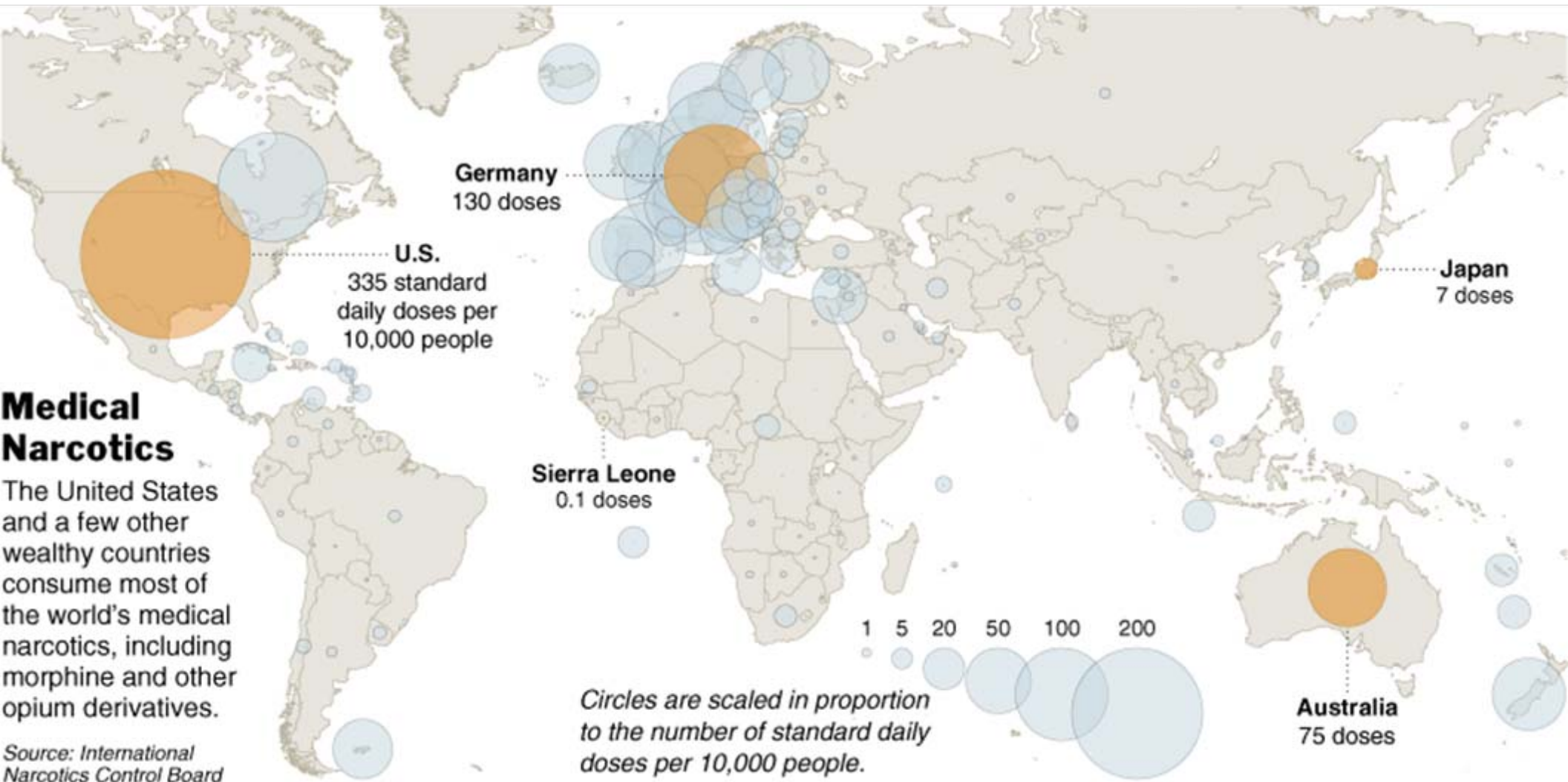
Status of WHO pain guidelines

Challenges and opportunities

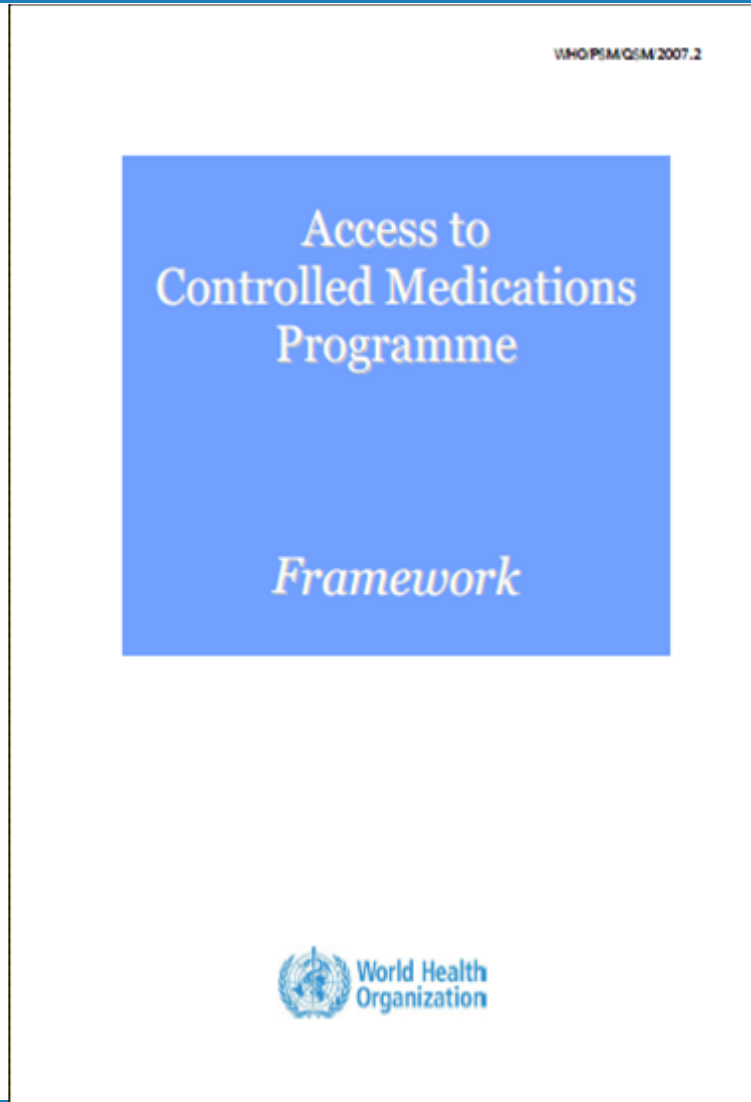
# 2007 Global Consumption of Morphine



# Morphine consumption map(2006)



# Access to Controlled Medications Programme (ACMP)



- Response to Resolutions ECOSOC 2005/25 and WHA 58.22 on opioid availability for pain relief
- WHO Programme to improve access to medicines controlled under the international treaties on psychotropic and narcotic drugs
- Launched in 2007 by WHO and the INCB

# Access to Controlled Medications Programme (ACMP)

Types of access barriers to controlled medicines including opioid analgesics.

- Attitudinal and educational barriers
- Policy barriers
- Regulatory and administrative barriers
- Supply barriers

# The need for WHO pain guidelines



WHO guidelines on cancer pain in adults (1996) and in children (1998).

No updated version, scope limited to only one type of pain (cancer).

The ACMP identified the development of pain guidelines to be a priority to tackle opiophobia and knowledge barriers.

2007 WHO Delphi study.

# Towards WHO pain guidelines

- WHO Steering Group on Pain Guidelines gathering technical officers from several departments created in January 2008.
- Approval for development of pain guidelines in adults and children by the WHO Guidelines Review Committee obtained in September 2008.
- Expanded review panel of experts created in 2008.
  - guidelines sub-groups (geographical representation, gender balance, required specialties)



# WHO Guidelines Review Committee (GRC)

Established by WHO in 2007. Composed by WHO officers and external experts.

The Committee's purpose is to develop and implement procedures that ensure WHO guidelines are developed in ways consistent with best practice.

Adopted the GRADE methodology to assess the overall quality of the evidence and define the strength of a recommendation.

# Crucial steps of the WHO process for developing guidelines:

## Scoping the guidelines

define the clinical, public health questions (Population, Intervention, Comparator, Outcomes: benefits and harms)

## Evidence retrieval, assessment and synthesis

Systematic search of existing systematic reviews (SR)

Assess the quality of retrieved evidence

## Formulation of recommendations

balance of evidence for benefits and harms/risks, costs, values, acceptability, feasibility

# Evidence retrieval, assessment and synthesis

Simplifying...

1) Systematic search of existing systematic reviews (SR)

➤ Assess the quality of SR

➤ eventually commission needed SR to answer clinical questions

2) Produce evidence summaries/profile using GRADE

GRADE approach allows for structured and transparent assessment of the quality of evidence for each outcome (benefits/arms)

# Formulating recommendations

Evidence assessment and synthesis, and formulation of recommendations:  
The GRADE approach



# Formulating recommendations

The Guidelines Group reviews the evidence, considers the balance of evidence for benefits and harms/risks, considers costs, values, acceptability, feasibility of the intervention

The recommendation is formulated outlining the above considerations ( with transparency ).

Experts with conflict of interest on the intervention are excluded from formulating the recommendation.

# Current status of WHO pain guidelines (1)

- 3 planned guidelines
- 1. WHO pharmacological guidelines of persisting pain in children with medical illnesses.
  - Guidelines group convened in March 2010: recommendations formulated.
  - Next steps: finalization of the guidelines text, peer revision, approval by GRC, internal clearance, publication and dissemination.

# Current status of WHO pain guidelines (2)

2. WHO pharmacological guidelines on chronic pain in adults
  - Scoping concluded
  - Partial retrieval of evidence (GRADE-like report)
3. WHO pharmacological guidelines on acute pain in children and adults
  - Scoping ongoing

# Challenges and opportunities (1)

- Rigorous WHO process/method allows to revise and/or revert older recommendations based on evidence and transparent considerations
  - International guidance, adaptation to local context, cost-saving
- No more focus on one single pain condition
  - Technically more challenging to develop
  - Avoid discrimination of pain relief based on disease condition
- Few clinical studies in children
  - Highlight gaps, propose and prioritize research for the international scientific community



# Challenges and opportunities (2)

- Need to develop guidelines on non-pharmacological interventions
- Need to assess and document opioid prescription by nurses in health systems that have adopted this measure to increase coverage of pain management
  - Legally allowed in UK and Lithuania, but limited published documentation
- Guidelines development relies on non-regular budget
  - Depends on fundraising capacity and donors' interest

# Acknowledgements

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The True Colours Trust

US Cancer Pain Relief Committee



# Thank you

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For further information: [www.who.int/medicines](http://www.who.int/medicines)  
"Controlled medicines"



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