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Jacob Barg

Ashkelon Academic College, Israel

Global trends of Drug Addiction as reflected in the Internet

Digital media provide increased opportunities for both health care and social transmission of risky products such as drugs. Psychoactive substances are continuously and increasingly appearing on the international drug market. Global Internet forums are a publicly available reality where users anonymously discuss and share information about drugs of abuse. Regardless of the degree of validity, publicly available content on the Internet is an undeniable reality, which remains the major source of information for the public regarding drug-related concerns. At the same time, the Internet has been identified as a key tool for facilitating use, providing direct access to supply and information. Internet searches, for example through Google, are used to access information. These searches provide data streams which can then be analysed through online services such as Google Trends (GT). GT is a free, open access online portal which allows users to analyse part of 3.5 billion daily Google searches. This internet tool provides data on geographical and temporal patterns in user-specified search terms. Using GT, we found a similar curve pattern of the relative annual proportion of "drug addiction" and "opiate" queries. Furthermore, a high

correlation was found between the query "drug addiction" and "physical abuse" or "physiological effects", $r=0.8886$ and $r=0.8882$, respectively. The power of analysed geographical and temporal trends will be also discussed. Taken together, these findings demonstrate the value of GT analyses as a tool complementing traditional sources and providing actionable intelligence to both law enforcement authorities and policy-makers.

Speaker Biography

Jacob Barg graduated from the Kaplan Medical Center. He completed his Ph.D. at the Weizmann Institute of Science in 1989. He performed a two-year postdoctoral research in the department of Biochemistry at St. Louis University. Following that, he joined the department of Biochemistry as an assistant research professor and then Head of Research and Development at Wolfson Medical Center. He joined the Ashkelon Academic College, department of Criminology to continue his contribution for the scientific welfare. He is a member of Israeli Olympic Committee for the Prevention of Sports Doping & also Presiding Judge of the Israeli National Committee and the Israeli Olympic Committee for the Prevention of Sports Doping.

e: bargrja07@gmail.com

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