

INCENTIVES FOR A HEALTHY POPULATION

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The nourishment we give to our children is important for how their bodies develop, while the entertainment we expose our children to is important for how their minds develop. Healthy nourishment is important for children to develop healthy bodies, while educational entertainment is helpful for children to develop clever minds. There is however unhealthy food in most supermarkets, and there is lots of noneducational entertainment on the Internet. Just like unhealthy food often tastes better, noneducational entertainment is also often more fun. This is because it requires more effort to make food both tasty and healthy, rather than to just make it tasty. In a similar fashion, it requires more effort to make entertainment both fun and educational, rather than to just make it fun. If children can choose themselves, they are likely to choose food that tastes good and entertainment that is fun, without taking into consideration how healthy or educational it is. And as long as there is lots of tasty unhealthy food and fun noneducational entertainment available, children are more likely to choose that.

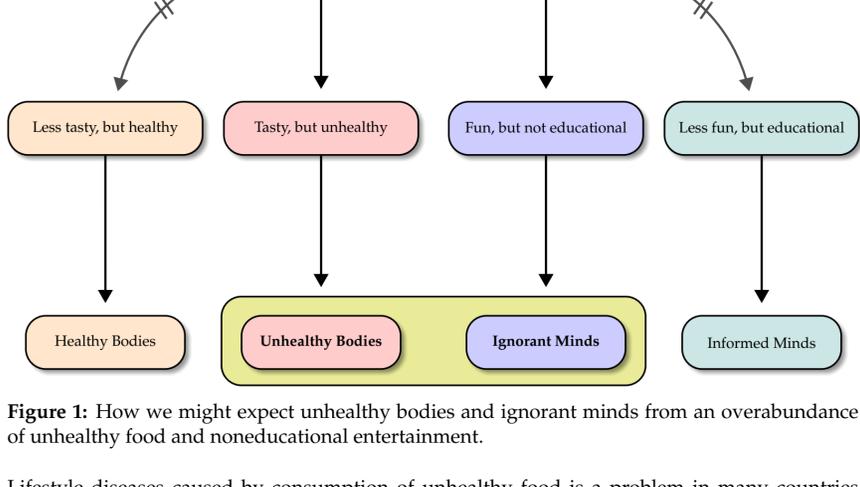


Figure 1: How we might expect unhealthy bodies and ignorant minds from an overabundance of unhealthy food and noneducational entertainment.

Lifestyle diseases caused by consumption of unhealthy food is a problem in many countries today. As people usually prefer to buy cheap groceries rather than more expensive groceries, unhealthy food should be taxed heavily while more healthy food should be subsidized. This policy will make people prefer to buy the healthy food rather than the unhealthy food, and improve the diet in our society while decreasing the number of lifestyle diseases. As lifestyle diseases also are expensive to our society, this policy will also make our society save substantial amounts of money. Any product that is hazardous to health should be taxed at least so much that it covers the expenses of the diseases caused by the product. The glycemic index is a measure of how fast different types of food increase blood sugar level (Figure 2). Foods that have a high glycemic index increase blood sugar level rapidly, while foods that have a low glycemic index increase blood sugar level slowly. A high intake foods that rapidly increase blood sugar has been linked to obesity, coronary heart disease, age-related macular degeneration, and diabetes type 2. The number of these lifestyle diseases can be reduced by having taxes on foods with a high glycemic index, while subsidizing foods with a low glycemic index.



Figure 2: Glycemic index for common foods. Foods with a high glycemic index should be taxed, while foods with a low glycemic index should be subsidized.

Consumable fat is usually divided into saturated, unsaturated and trans fat. Trans fats are rare in nature, but became common for human consumption after the 1950's, when we started to produce margarine by hydrogenating unsaturated fat. Trans fat has been found to be hazardous to human health in numerous ways^[1], but has been primarily linked to coronary heart disease. Since we have strong indications that trans fats are hazardous to human health, trans fats should be taxed heavily. Saturated fats are found mostly in meat, while unsaturated fats are found mostly in vegetables. Saturated fats have traditionally been regarded as hazardous to human health, while unsaturated fats have been regarded as beneficial to human health. Today this is a highly controversial topic. Vegetables are however beneficial to human health for other reasons, as they contain a high concentration of fibres, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants^[2]. We can also get about 10 times more calories per acre from plants than from farm animals^[3], as a lot of energy is lost in the metabolism of farm animals. This means that we can feed about 10 times more vegetarians than carnivores from the same amount of land. These are good reasons to subsidize vegetables.

Ending the war on recreational drugs

According to the microeconomic model of supply and demand^[4], the price of a product goes up if the product becomes less available while the demand for the product stays the same. So the irony of drug prohibition is that the more money we spend on enforcing laws to decrease the availability of drugs, the more money criminals can earn on selling drugs as long as the demand for drugs stays the same^[5]. The American war on drugs has cost trillions of US dollars since it was implemented, while the amount of drug abuse has increased^[6]. The war on drugs has also contributed to a 500% increase in the number of people incarcerated^[7]. A report from 2011 by The Global Commission on Drug Policy^[8] regarded the war on drugs as a complete failure, and recommended to end criminalization of drug usage.

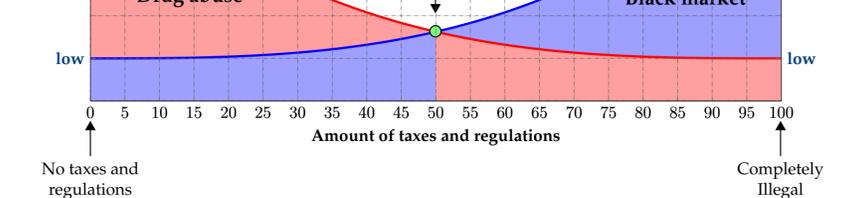


Figure 3: Showing the predicted optimal level of taxes and regulations, as drug abuse is believed to increase with less taxes and regulations, while the black market is believed to increase with more taxes and regulations.

In a society where recreational drugs are legal there should be an optimal level of taxes and regulations on the drugs (Figure 3). Black market activity can be just as detrimental to our society as drug abuse, and if there are too much taxes and regulations there will be an incentive to sell drugs on the black market. It is however somewhat risky to sell drugs on the black market, so if there are not too much taxes and regulations the sale of drugs can be kept mainly within the legal system. If drugs are legal we can also require that they are manufactured according to the same standards as today's pharmaceutical drugs, and we can require that they are sold with labels informing consumers about what they contain and about potential dangers. Drugs in the black market often contain harmful impurities, and they do not have any labels informing consumers about what they contain and about potential dangers. Recreational drugs can be taxed and regulated according to how harmful they are from scientific point of view (Figure 4).

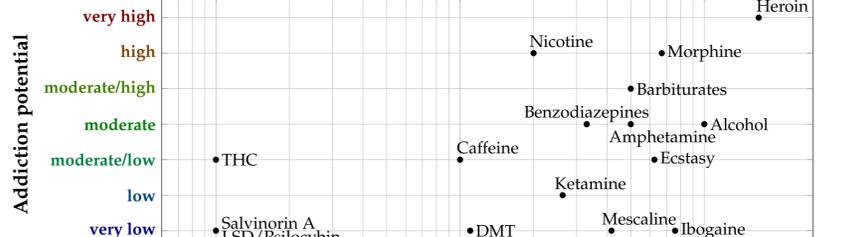


Figure 4: Diagram showing overdose potential (active dose/lethal dose) and addiction potential for different drugs.

In a report from 2006 by the UK Science and Technology Select Committee^[9], the legal drugs alcohol and tobacco were found to be more harmful than many illegal drugs; such as marijuana, LSD, ecstasy, and magic mushrooms. The drugs were categorized according to physical harm, dependence and social harms. Another even more detailed report from 2010 by the Independent Scientific Committee on Drugs^[10] draw similar conclusions. An article from 2006 about the toxicity of recreational drugs^[11] found the overdose potential of ethanol to be approximately a hundred times higher than the illegal drugs marijuana, LSD and magic mushrooms.

Drug addiction and κ -opioid agonists like Ibogaine

Some drugs even have anti-addictive properties. Tabernanthe iboga is a plant traditionally used by people belonging to the Bwiti faith in mid-west Africa^[12]. Addiction is believed to be controlled by a system of neurological pathways in the brain, called the reward-system^[13]. Ibogaine, which is the active alkaloid of the Tabernanthe iboga plant, has been shown to stimulate the κ -opioid receptor^[14]. Stimulation of the κ -opioid receptor has been shown to restore normal functioning of the reward-system in an addicted brain, and thereby curing addiction^[15]. Ibogaine does this so well that a single addition often is enough to completely eliminate the withdrawal effects from a heroin addiction.

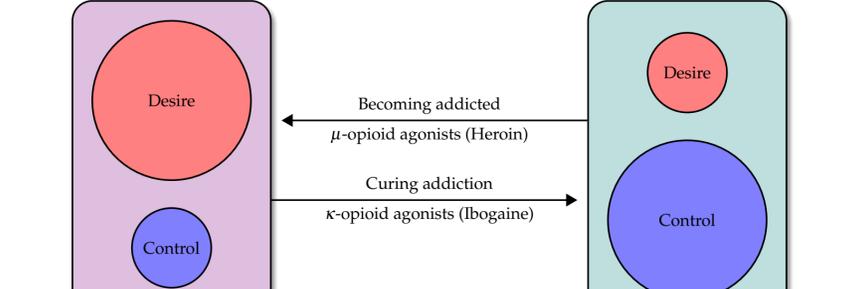


Figure 5: How κ -opioid agonists like Ibogaine are believed to restore normal functioning of the reward-system in an addicted brain, by decreasing the desire for drugs and increasing self-control mechanisms.

Drug addicts might however start using drugs again after they have been treated with Ibogaine, unless they get help to reintegrate into society. They have often been unemployed for many years, and often have a social network consisting only of other drug addicts. To completely cure them, they need to get work and establish a new social network consisting of healthy individuals. So drug addicts should go into a 1 year reintegration program, after they have been treated with Ibogaine (Figure 6).

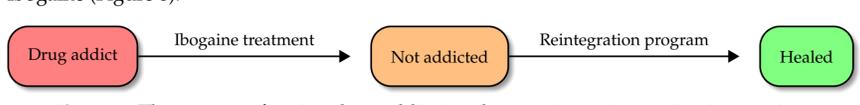


Figure 6: The process of curing drug addiction also requires reintegration into society.

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