

Quality versus price of "street" samples of heroin in Sri Lanka

The objective underlying the above project was essentially to determine the relationship, if any, which exists between the quality and price of samples of heroin available on the "street". Constraints did exist in view of the available "sources" of supply and the limited areas from which samples were made available.

A total of 763 "street" samples of heroin were subjected to analysis by High Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC) and Thin Layer Chromatography (TLC) with a view to determining their respective di-acetylmorphine (DAM) percentage and the presence or absence of sugars, starches etc. as adulterants, the presence of common cutting agents such as caffeine, benzodiazepines etc. and the presence of any other drugs of abuse such as cocaine. The above detailed analysis was undertaken in consequence of the need to ascertain whether any parameters other than the % DAM had any bearing on price.

Viewed overall, with the limited samples analysed, it appears that there is no direct relationship between price and purity in all areas studied, where purity means the percentage of DAM in a given sample, the greater the percentage the higher being the purity. This would mean that factors other than percentage DAM, appear to determine the price levels.

Some possibilities are suggested in the paper on the basis of the results obtained.