

Addiction scientists call for end to executions for drug offenders

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The death penalty for those convicted of drug trafficking and other drug-related offences should be abolished as it is both ineffective as a policy measure and a violation of human rights.

So write a group of prominent [addiction](#) scientists who believe that the international addiction community has a responsibility to support the abolitionist cause.

The editorial Drug trafficking: time to abolish the death penalty, published online today in the August issue of the journal *Addiction*, argues that capital punishment is not an effective deterrent for drug-related offences, since it is usually poor and replaceable mules and "runners" who are likely to be caught and executed.

The authors cite the UN statement that capital punishment should be imposed only for "intentional crime with lethal or other extremely severe consequences", and argue that since trafficking is "no more a proximate and inevitable cause of death than is the trade in motorcars or the sale of tobacco", the execution of those found guilty of drug trafficking, or other drug-related offences, is a violation of human rights.

The editorial calls for addiction scientists to speak out against the use of the death penalty for drug trafficking, and the authors have circulated a copy to the editors of 45 other academic journals in the addiction field; a number of them will also be publishing the editorial in support of the cause.

Says lead author Professor Griffith Edwards: "The signatories to this editorial are scientists with many years of experience in advising governments as to what drug policies are, in this arena, more or less likely to work. They are saying now with one voice that the death penalty for drug-related offences is a totally ineffective response to a complex problem. Science advises that the penalty should be abolished."

More information: Edwards G., Babor T., Darke S., Hall W., Marsden J., Miller P., West R. Drug Trafficking: time to abolish the death penalty. *Addiction* 2009; 104: 1267 [www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi...t/122511516/PDFSTART](http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/jid/122511516/PDFSTART)

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