

How the use of the Internet is affecting drug trafficking practices

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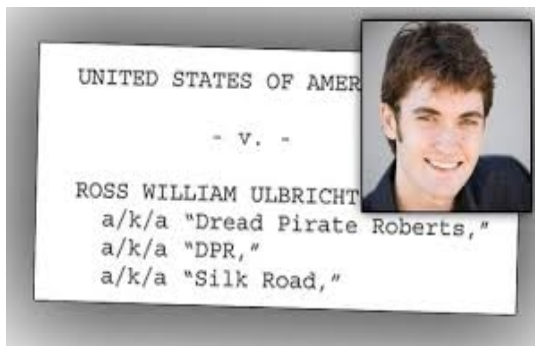
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Internet-mediated drug trafficking: the state of the art

(INCB 2001, Rider 2001, Britz 2008, Walsh 2011, Christin 2012, UNODC 2013, EMCDDA 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 ...)

Focus on the Deep Web

E.g. **SILK ROAD**



An eBay for drugs?

B2C or B2B?

Silk Road 2.0, Agora, Abraxas, Outlaw, Silk Road Reloaded



New Psychotropic Substances (NPSs)

1961 Single Convention on Narcotics Drugs

1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances

... all modern nations have regulatory frameworks that prohibit the importation, manufacturing, growth, distribution, sale, and use of a variety of recreational drugs

NPS is “a new narcotic or psychotropic drug, in pure form or in preparation, that is not controlled by the United Nations drug conventions, but which may pose a public health threat comparable to that posed by substances listed in these conventions” (EMCDDA)

[Counterfeit pharmaceuticals]

“spurious/falsely-labelled/falsified /counterfeit (SFFC) medicines are medicines that are deliberately and fraudulently mislabeled with respect to identity and/or source” (WHO 2012)

50% sold online are counterfeits , 100,000-700,000 deaths per years (?)

USD 75billion/year (10% global trade in medicines)

North-South divide

Over The Counter (OTC) & Prescription Only (POM)

Internet-mediated drug trafficking

What kinds of criminal opportunities the Internet offers for drug trafficking to occur? *How* these opportunities affect the organisation of drug trafficking?

- 1) To what extent does the Internet provide new criminal opportunities for drug trafficking? What kind of criminal opportunities are provided? What specific phases of drug trafficking are facilitated by the Internet?
- 2) How do actors involved in drug trafficking exploit these new criminal opportunities?
- 3) Does this new opportunity structure change the relationships between actors involved in drug trafficking? If so, how?

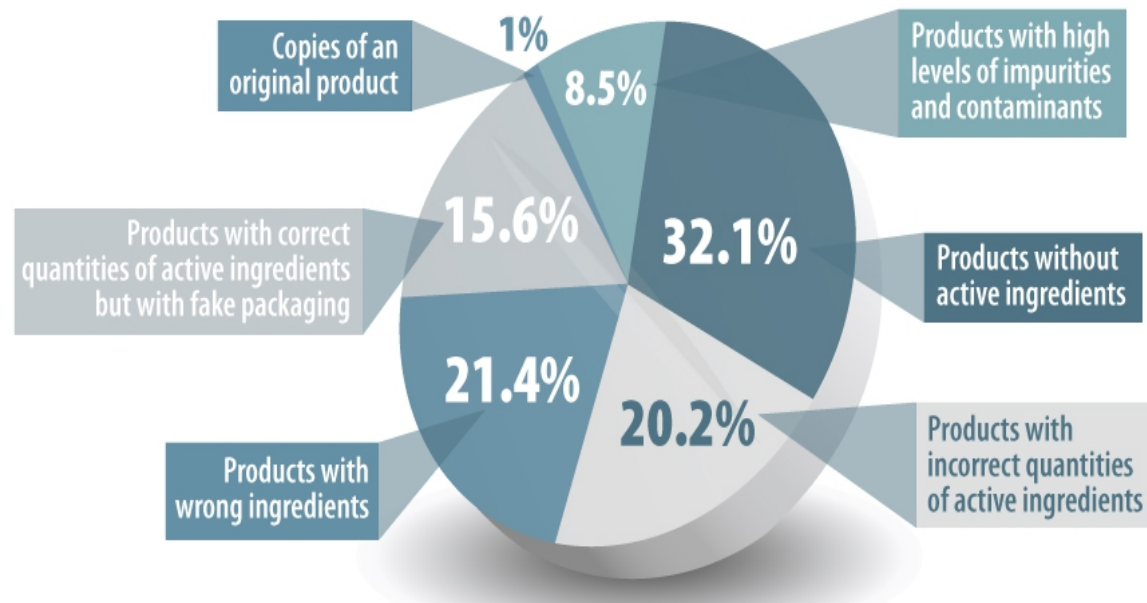
What are the main challenges for researchers and law enforcement to better understand / counter this criminal activity?

[Counterfeit pharmaceuticals]

One of these medicines is fake.
Can you tell which?



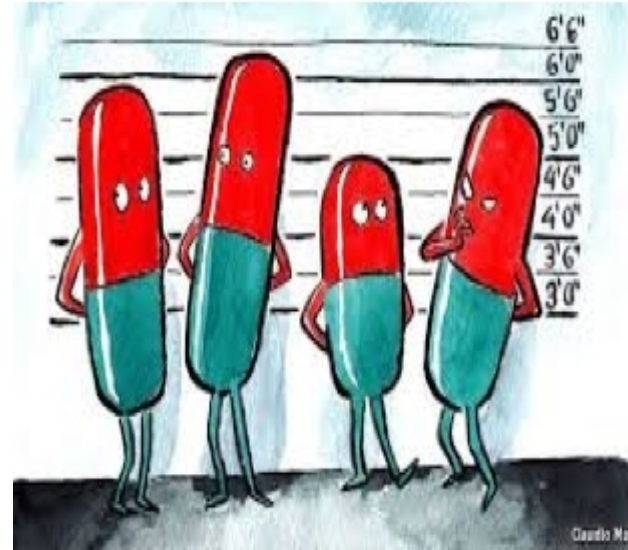
- Online pharmacies (legal / fake / illegal)
- Hot products (“lifestyle drugs” / opioid analgesics and psychotropic substances / “natural products” or nutritional supplements etc)



Internet-mediated drug trafficking

Opportunities

- Communicative
- Informational
- Managerial
- Organizational and relational
- Promotional, marketing, persuasive and loyalty-building
- Targeting
- Technical
- (Countermeasure)









Trends

- Transnationality
- Continuous transformation
- Especially in the distribution & intermediate passage stages, everything can be managed from the destination country
- On cyber-hotspots and convergence settings
- Actors (as retailers / segmentation of the market)
- Relationships with clients
- Trust

**LOWEST
PRICES
GUARANTEED!**

Più venduti

 Viagra Generico sildenafil €0.56 Informazioni	 Cialis Generico tadalafil €0.70 Informazioni	 Levitra Generico vardenafil €1.06 Informazioni
 Viagra Generico Dapoxetine €2.12 Informazioni	 Viagra Generico Oral Jelly €1.41 Informazioni	 ED Trial Pack Viagra/Cialis /Levitra €21.31 Informazioni
 Acompla Generico rimonabant €0.95 Informazioni	 Xenical Generico orlistat €1.11 Informazioni	 Reductil Generico sibutramine €0.69 Informazioni



Exploiting legal loopholes

- “Drugs that run on the edge of legality”
- Buyers' awareness / social perception
- Dissemblance
- Taking advantage of differences in national regulation

Cyber-hotspots

- Surface + Deep Web
- “Convergence settings” (for offenders)
+ hubs for relational opportunities
- New (online) hotspots
+ extension of traditional (offline) hotspots
- Convergence settings for users (e.g. forums)

Criminal actors involved

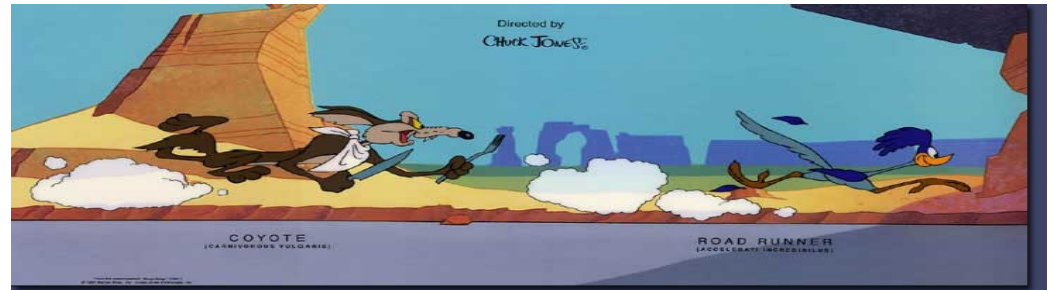
- “Organized crime” narrative
- A distinction should be drawn!
 - a) OCGs
 - b) Other types of offenders

Different use of crime opportunities  different MOs

Law enforcement perception/policing

- Nationality
 - different experiences
 - online monitoring is something “new”
 - building experience as they go

- Ranking / generation



- New criminal opportunities →
new vulnerabilities →
new dynamics of social and institutional control
- Traditional policing online:
occasional, complicated, costly (McMullan & Rege 2010).
Lack of: culture, expertise, resources; vastness of cyberspace



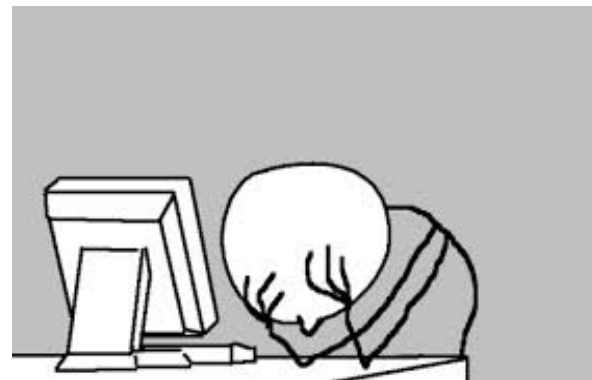
- Also new opportunities for intelligence gathering.
- Surveillance?
 - Profiling, “intelligence-led” searches
 - Substantial + procedural rules for gathering and handling the data
- More responsibility to informal/ alternative ways of social control
Challenge!
- Research-informed good practices for LEAs , self-policing (Brenner 2006), reporting
- Civilian policing on the Internet (Huey et al. 2012), sense of shared responsibility in online communities (Wall & Williams 2007)
 - How to be proactive?
 - Towards an hypothesis-based approach?

Researching crime & deviancy online

The Internet is also a source of data for academic research

- Manual collection of online traces
E.g., virtual ethnography (passive/ active)
- Automatic collection of online traces
Mirroring, monitoring, leaks (E.g., web crawlers)

Technological challenges + ethical considerations



Internet-mediated drug trafficking

What else?

- Not only drug markets!! Other Internet-facilitated criminal markets plus “cybercrimes” in a more narrow sense.
- “ePusher. Tackling online drug trafficking through crime prevention”
 - WP1 to profile behavioural patterns (e.g. dealing with issues of trust and risk management) within virtual communities. Big role of Comp Sci here (crawling + algorithmic socio-economic profiling, identification of linguistic fingerprints and transaction activity profiles).
 - WP2 to assess current policing approaches.
 - WP3 to propose effective crime prevention measures that are ok for all the stakeholders / communities involved.