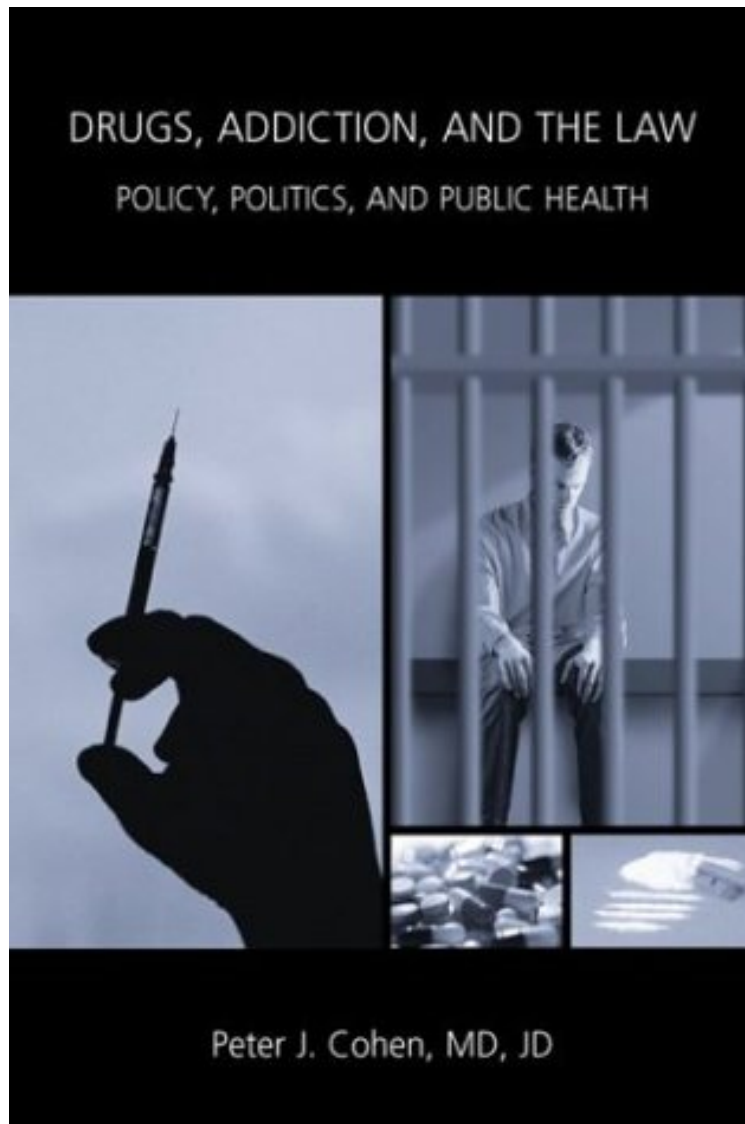


Drugs, Addiction, and the Law: Policy, Politics, and Public Health

Peter J. Cohen

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The use and abuse of psychotropic (mind-altering) drugs is an integral part of the human experience. Society has long viewed substance abuse through many eyes: criminal activity, moral failing, illness and disability, or simply the exercise of individual liberty. Nonetheless, whether the drugs involved are "legal" or "illicit," substance abuse is a major public health hazard. Author Peter Cohen offers a thorough and thoughtful discussion of the major legal, ethical, and policy considerations that society faces as it deals with substance abuse and dependence (addiction). Several major areas will be addressed: (1) the differences and similarities between "legal" and "scientific" reasoning; (2) the science of drug dependence; (3) balancing the rights inherent in maintaining individual liberty and autonomy with the needs of society (an integral requirement of public health as a medical and legal discipline); (4) the role of criminalization in attempting to control what many believe to be a medical problem; (5) the application of disability law to substance abuse and dependence; (6) "legitimizing" the use of smoked marijuana for medical purposes; and (7) the concept that if substance abuse is, at least in part, a public health problem, it should be amenable to therapy similar to other medical conditions and should receive parity in regulation, treatment, and research.

About the Author Peter J. Cohen is a physician, attorney, and an adjunct professor of law at the Georgetown University Law Center.