

Study says alcohol more harmful than marijuana

A major new study into drugs, published in the British medical journal [The Lancet](#), has concluded that alcohol and tobacco are more dangerous than many highly illegal drugs. They are listed in the top 10 most dangerous substances in the study. Researchers believe British law should classify alcohol and tobacco the same as hard drugs such as heroin and cocaine. Head researcher Professor David Nutt of Britain's Bristol University suggested a new classification of harmful substances. He said it needed to be based on the actual risks posed to society. Professor Nutt said the new system was necessary in Britain as the existing one was out of date: "The current drug system is ill thought-out and arbitrary," he said. He added there was no scientific basis for excluding alcohol and tobacco as serious drugs.

Professor Nutt and his colleagues used three factors to find out how harmful a drug is: the physical harm to the user, how addictive the drug is, and the impact it has on society. The researchers were experts in drug addiction, lawyers and police officers with scientific or medical backgrounds and doctors. All of them agreed on the dangers of alcohol and tobacco. They ranked alcohol as the fifth and tobacco as the ninth most harmful drugs. Heroin and cocaine finished top, while marijuana was eleventh and Ecstasy finished last in the list of 20 drugs. The latter two are illegal in Britain and America, while alcohol and tobacco are legal. Tobacco causes 40 percent of all hospital illnesses, while alcohol is blamed for more than half of all visits to hospital emergency rooms. They also harm society in other ways. They damage families and stretch police services.