

# **Drug Regulation Contradiction: The Paradox of Overregulation**

Author: Ryuusho Nemoto

Year: 2025

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# Abstract

This paper examines the paradox emerging from excessive regulation of sleeping pills in Japan. While intended to prevent abuse and diversion, such regulation has paradoxically cornered patients in need of medical treatment. By analyzing this contradiction, the study highlights how restrictive policies can backfire and ultimately intensify the very problems they were designed to resolve. Furthermore, it draws connections between Japan's case and the global drug regulation landscape, emphasizing the universal dangers of overregulation.

## Introduction

In Japan, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare has strengthened legal restrictions on the prescription of sleeping pills, motivated largely by the need to prevent resale by welfare recipients. However, this policy overlooks a critical fact: the medical demand for such medications frequently exceeds the limits imposed by regulation. As a result, patients requiring legitimate treatment are deprived of access, leading to severe harm and social consequences. This contradiction provides the foundation for a broader exploration of the paradox inherent in drug regulation.

## Contradiction

The contradiction is clear: regulation aimed at preventing abuse simultaneously obstructs genuine treatment. Patients face under-prescription, doctors face restrictions incompatible with medical realities, and society witnesses an expansion of illegal distribution channels. Rather than curbing misuse, the current framework fuels new risks, exemplifying a systemic paradox.

## Case Study: Japan's Sleeping Pill Regulation

Japan's restrictions on dosage and prescription duration were designed to prevent diversion into the black market. However, evidence suggests that these measures have directly undermined psychiatric care, pushing vulnerable patients towards illicit alternatives. In this way, the policy not only fails to achieve its stated goals but actively harms the population it intends to protect.

## Universalization

This paradox is not unique to Japan. Across the world, drug regulations reveal the same structural problem: the stricter the prohibition, the more resilient the illegal markets become. The logic of "overregulation as control" collapses into a vicious feedback loop, where attempts at suppression accelerate the very phenomena they seek to eliminate.

## Conclusion

Japan's regulatory contradiction illustrates a broader principle: regulation that aims to suppress can, paradoxically, stimulate the circulation it intends to prevent. Excessive drug regulation backfires, expanding illicit flows rather than containing them. This universal paradox demonstrates that the dangers of overregulation are embedded within the global framework of drug control. A reconsideration of policy—grounded in medical realities and universal principles—is therefore essential.

## References

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