



Marijuana; is it a Medicine?

With a little homework, one can learn that marijuana has been rejected as medicine by the American Medical Association, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, the American Glaucoma Society, the American Academy of Ophthalmology and the American Cancer Society. Not one American health association accepts marijuana as medicine.

The information cited in this brief was compiled from an article written by Robert C. Bonner, Administrator of Drug Enforcement, and former United States District Judge, 1992.

Glaucoma

Glaucoma patients face possible blindness caused by very high fluid pressures within the eyes. If one were to use marijuana in an attempt to lower eye fluid pressure, it can cause dramatic drops in blood pressure and thus reduce blood supply to the optic nerves. "The quantities of marijuana required to reduce intraocular pressure in glaucoma sufferers are large, and would require in inhalation of at least six (6) marijuana cigarettes each day.", said Dr. Keith Green, American Journal of Ophthalmology (1982). Furthermore, glaucoma experts testify that this reduction of blood supply to the optic nerves due to low blood pressure could speed up, rather than slow down, the loss of eyesight. The most recent of these studies; J.C. Merritt, W.J. Crawford, P.C. Alexander, A.L. Anduze and S.S. Gelbart, "Effect of Marijuana on Intraocular and Blood Pressure in Glaucoma," 87 Ophthalmology 222-228 (1980), showed very heavy doses taken over short periods of time can reduce eye pressure temporarily.

Multiple Sclerosis

Amputees and victims of MS can suffer from extreme muscle spasms. It is claimed marijuana is useful in treating spasticity. Three unusually small, inconclusive studies have tried using *pure THC*, not marijuana, to treat spasticity. D.J. Petro and C. Ellenberger, "Treatment of Human Spasticity with Delta-9-Tetrahydro-cannabinol," 21 Journal of Clinical Pharmacology 413S-416S (1981) included only nine patients. Two of the studies were mere abstracts without much detail. Hanigan, Destee & Troung Abstr. B45, Clinical Pharmacology 198 (1986) included five patients, and Sandyk, Cannoe, Stern and Snider Abstr. PP 331, 36 Neurology 342 (1986) included three patients. There have been no scientific studies which test marijuana to relieve spasticity. "In the existing research using THC, the results have been inconclusive.", says Dr. Stephen Reingold, Assistant Vice President of Research for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Cancer

The immune systems of cancer patients are weakened by radiation and chemotherapy, leaving them susceptible to infection. Using marijuana to control nausea weakens the immune system even further and exposes them to the infection-causing bacteria; salmonella enteritidis, Klebsilla pneumonia, group D streptococcus and pathogenic aspergillus (Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, 1992.) There are scientific studies showing pure THC, one of many chemicals found in marijuana, has some effect in controlling nausea and vomiting. Pure marijuana is pharmaceutically made in capsule form, called MARINOL, and is available for use by prescription in the medical community. Since marijuana contains THC one might think marijuana would be effective like Marinol. This is not the case. The Sallan study (Sallan, et al., "Antiemetic Effect of Delta-9-Tetrahydrocannabinol in Patients Receiving Cancer Chemotherapy," 293 New England Journal of Medicine 795-797 (1975)) is cited as proving marijuana stops

nausea and vomiting. The problem with this is the Sallan study tested pure THC, not marijuana. Another study commonly cited is by Dr. Levitt (Levitt et al., "Randomized Double Blind Comparison of Delta-9-Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and Marijuana as Chemotherapy Antiemetics," (Meeting Abstract) 3 Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology 91 (1984)). This study compared marijuana to THC in controlling nausea and vomiting. What Dr. Levitt concluded was that THC was the effective drug, not marijuana. One of the nation's top cancer experts, Dr. David S. Ettinger, professor at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, states "There is no indication that marijuana is effective in treating nausea and vomiting. There are no legitimate studies which have been conducted making such conclusions." Dr. John Laszlo, Vice President of Research for the American Cancer Society, an expert who has spent 37 years researching cancer treatments testified: "There is not enough scientific evidence to justify using marijuana to treat nausea and vomiting." In fact not one nationally recognized cancer expert could be found to testify on marijuana's behalf. In a more recent study, "Effects of Marijuana on the Lungs and Its Immune Defenses", University of California-Los Angeles School of Medicine Study, 1997, it was found that smoking 3-5 marijuana joints per week is equivalent to smoking 16 cigarettes per day. This is due in part to the greater number of cancer causing chemicals found in marijuana verse tobacco, and also the way the drug is inhaled and held in the lungs.