



Marijuana Research

Addictive?

One long standing question regarding Marijuana use is whether it is a physically addictive drug. Billy Martin, M.D., a pharmacologist from the Medical College of Virginia looked at the issue of withdrawal symptoms from marijuana, a hall mark study of addictive substances. With Marijuana it is so hard to tell because the chemical lingers in the body for so long that concrete withdrawal symptoms are hard to observe. When laboratory mice were given the equivalent to 1 to 2 joints of marijuana a day for 5 days, and then the mice were given a chemical that blocks marijuana's brain receptors, rapidly cutting off the effects of the drug's effects, the mice did go into physical withdrawal. The withdrawal symptoms most noticed were "wet dog shakes" (the animal shakes all over as if they were a wet dog attempting to rid them self of the water). Facial rubbing and hyper excitability were also noticed.

Effects to the Brain?

Peter Fried, PhD, a psychology professor at Carleton University in Ontario, Canada, has some preliminary results from a 15 year study of 150 children who had been "marijuana exposed" (parents who used marijuana as teens), including 35 who were exposed to marijuana-smoking mothers prior to birth (these mothers used no other drugs and received good prenatal care). His results indicate that beginning around 4 years of age, impairments in verbal reasoning and memory function were detected in the children who's mothers had used. No difference in intelligence was detected. Other deficits were detected in the "marijuana exposed" children. By ages 5,6, and 7 deficits in ability to sustain attention was detected. By ages 9-12 the ability to plan strategically (the ability to weigh complex information and reason through alternatives to a decision) was statistically below the norm.

"Amotivational syndrome" has been reported in chronic marijuana users. It is characterized by decreased drive and ambition. A number of other psychological impairments such as shortened attention span, poor judgement, high distractibility, impaired communication skills, and diminished effectiveness in interpersonal situations also have been observed (NIDA, 1995).

Damage to the Lungs?

Donald Tashkin, MD, of the University of California at Los Angeles, found that daily use of up to three marijuana cigarettes a day poses approximately the same lung damage and cancer risk as smoking five times as many tobacco cigarettes. 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.

Adults: What's Your Responsibility?

Adults must tell kids that marijuana use is illegal! That it is not benign, it is not harmless and it should not be legalized. As the perceived risk of marijuana use on a regular basis goes down, monthly marijuana use on a regular basis goes up.

Marijuana Research Resource List

- “Marijuana Smoke Contains Higher Levels Of Certain Toxins Than Tobacco Smoke” Science Daily, Dec. 18, 2007 - American Chemical Society
- “Marijuana Smokers Face Rapid Lung Destruction - As Much As 20 Years Ahead Of Tobacco Smokers” Science Daily, Jan. 27, 2008 - 2008 issue of Respiriology
- “Smoking Marijuana Impairs Cognitive Function In MS Patients, Study Shows” Science Daily, February 13, 2008, American Academy of Neurology
- “Long-term Marijuana Smoking Leads To Respiratory Complaints”, Science Daily, Kristina Crothers, M.D., Brent A. Moore, Reena Mehra, M.D., John Concato, M.D., and David Fiellin, M.D. - Archives of Internal Medicine, Vol. 167, February 12, 2007
- “Study Finds No Link Between Marijuana Use And Lung Cancer” Science Daily, Dr. Tashkin, American Thoracic Society International Conference, May 23, 2006
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