



MARIJUANA – IMPACT ON PUBLIC HEALTH

The harms outweigh any benefits of relief

By Roger Morgan, Exec Director, Coalition for A Drug-Free California

THC, the active psychoactive ingredient in marijuana, has increased from 1 to 3% percent in the early 1970's to an average of 10.4% today ranging as high as 37%. The result? Over 120,000 emergency room visits a year where marijuana was the only cause, and 300,000 where it was a cause. 62% of people in treatment are there for addiction to marijuana than for alcohol and all other drugs combined.

While pro-pot advocates extol the healing powers of marijuana, the fact is, it can provide relief, but it doesn't heal anything. Its not medicinal. It is a schedule I drug because it is harmful, has no accepted medical value and has the potential for harm. In fact, it is even harmful to those who think it does no harm.

As reported by Albert Stuart Reece of the Medical School, U of Queensland, marijuana causes impaired respiratory conditions including reduced lung density, lung cysts, and chronic bronchitis; elevated risk of testicular cancer and eightfold rise in lung cancer risk. It elevates the risk of psychosis and schizophrenia, particularly when cannabis consumption commences at an early age. It creates high levels of anxiety, impaired memory, poor concentration, impaired learning ability and psychomotor impairment including reduced quality and quantity of work and intellectual impairment. Heavy cannabis use is also associated with substantial bone loss.

Maternal cannabis use has resulted in toxic affects on the fetus leading to reduced body weight at birth, and behavior problems including attention disorder, behavior problems, lower child IQ, language comprehension, distractibility, inattention, hyperactivity, impulsivity and substance use disorders.

According to Joseph Califano at Columbia University, “..... in 2008 health care costs in the US totaled \$2.4 trillion. 30% of those costs were attributable to 72 diseases substance abuse and addiction cause. 35% of Medicare spending - \$134 billion – and 29 percent of Medicaid spending - \$98 billion – were attributable to smoking, excessive drinking and drug abuse.”

Califano also states **even a 10% reduction in substance abuse would deliver savings of \$73 billion a year** in health costs, and over 10 years, pay for 80% of the cost of Obamacare.

Since many pot users are unemployed and on welfare, or underemployed and don't have health insurance, the economic burden of their health care falls on taxpayers. If marijuana were legalized, consumption would increase as did consumption of alcohol after prohibition, and the public health problem and associated costs would skyrocket. Drug abuse almost always starts with a little puff of marijuana.

Scientific information provided by Eric Voth, M.D. of The Institute on Global Drug Policy.