



MARIJUANA: RELIEF DOESN'T MEAN ITS MEDICINE

Or that our \$8.6 million tax dollars weren't wasted

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

The recent \$8.6 million study by UC San Diego which was orchestrated by Senators Vasconcellos and Leno was a waste of money. We knew pot could provide relief. But that doesn't mean it is medicine, harmless or should be smoked for any reason.

If one is interested in valuable discoveries about marijuana, they can reflect on research conducted by UC San Diego and UCLA scientists that showed marijuana retards development of white matter in the brain **even 28 days after abstinence**. White matter, or lack of it, is a major cause of schizophrenia. That should give pause even to the 98% of "medical marijuana" card holders who abuse the system to access pot for their personal pleasure.

Science in the last ten years or so has also revealed that the human brain is not fully developed until the mid twenties, or beyond. Until it is, it is much more vulnerable to harm. So when more kids now smoke pot than tobacco because they think it is medicine and legal, they may be setting themselves up for mental illness that will ruin their lives and increase the social and economic burden on society.

Marijuana can provide relief, but it is a poor choice as a medicine. It is a complex, unstable mixture of 483 chemicals, that when smoked, creates over 2,000 chemicals, many of which cause cancer. Any medicinal value lies not in the whole crude plant, but in the isolated components, and never in smoked form. Further, there are existing legal products that work as well or better, that don't carry the harms inherent in marijuana. (E. Voth, M.D.)

Smoking anything is hazardous to health. The legal drug tobacco kills 1200 people a day. But pot is also an intoxicant, 10 to 20 times stronger today than in the flower power days of the 70's. It is the sole cause of over 120,000 emergency room visits, more than heroin; the cause of 26.9% of injury accidents, and it elevates the risk of cancer, mental illness, birth defects, bone loss and adversely affects academic achievement and productivity. It is also a **gateway to hard drugs which cause 3,200 overdose deaths monthly**. (SAMSHA)

Legislators like Vasconcellos, Leno and now Ammiano have access to scientific evidence that leaves no doubt as to the harms of marijuana. Their actions aren't directed at the best interests of their constituents, but more in line with campaign contributions.

We need politicians, irrespective of party affiliation, that will place the public's health, safety and economic interests before their own.