

# Narcotic Educational Foundation of America

Drug Abuse Education Provider of the:

## California Narcotic Officers' Association

# USE OF MARIJUANA AS A "MEDICINE"

### QUICK FACTS:

Marijuana, a plant from the cannabis family, is illegal and highly psychoactive. Marijuana and its associated compounds can seriously affect the human body. The acute cannabis drug influence, accelerates (speeds up) certain body functions. This class of drugs causes an "artificial" state of stimulation. Some of the signs of these body functions are increased heart and respiratory rate, elevated blood pressure, and the dilation of the pupils of the eyes. High doses have also caused very rapid and / or irregular heart beats, tremors, loss of coordination, and in some cases a stroke.

Cannabis addictive qualities are exerted on that region of the brain and central nervous system that is responsible for pain relief, endurance, muscle relaxation, and tranquilizer effects. The brain's neurochemicals associated with cannabis have a direct effect upon impairment as expressed with judgment and decision making. The presence of non-convergence (ability to cross eyes) and non-reactive pupils of the eye, can impair visual tracking ability which may produce accidents and injuries. The elimination of the metabolic products of cannabis from the body is slow, as it stores in the fatty tissue. In chronic users it can be detected in the urine for 30 to 45 days after

### MARIJUANA IS NOT A MEDICINE

There currently exists controversy concerning smoking marijuana as a medicine. Many well-intentioned leaders and members of the public have been misled, by the well-financed and organized pro-drug legalization lobby, into believing there is merit to their argument that smoking marijuana is a safe and effective medicine. A review of the scientific research, expert medical testimony, and government agency findings, shows this to be erroneous. There is *no* justification for using marijuana as a medicine.

The California Narcotics Officers' Association consists of over 7,000 criminal justice professionals who are dedicated to protecting the public from the devastating effects of substance abuse, whether cocaine, methamphetamine, or marijuana. We have seen first hand the debilitating and often tragic results, both psychologically and physically, of those who choose intoxication as a part of their lifestyle. We have studied the medicinal use of marijuana issue, compiling information from medical experts to present to those we are sworn to protect. It is our firm belief that any movement that liberalizes or legalizes substance abuse laws

would set us back to the days of the 70's, when we experienced this country's worst drug problem, and the subsequent consequences. In the 80's, through the combined and concerted effort of law enforcement, education, prevention, and treatment professionals, illicit drug use was reduced by 50 percent. Teenagers graduating from the class of 1992 had a 50 percent less likely chance of using drugs than those who graduated in the class of 1979.

Substance abuse rises whenever public attitude is more tolerant toward drugs, i.e., they are safe and harmless. Other factors that contribute to a rise in use include increased availability, reduced risk associated with using or selling, and lower prices. In 1993, or the first time after 12 years of steady decline, illicit drug use rose and continues to climb. A major contributing factor is a message that drugs "aren't so bad." To counter this "just say yes" campaign, we feel compelled to provide the facts on the use of smoking marijuana as a medicine. These well documented facts will prove beyond a doubt that

**MARIJUANA IS NOT A  
MEDICINE.**

**FACT:** The movement to legitimize smoking marijuana as a medicine is NOT encouraged by the pharmaceutical companies, Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA), health and medical associations, or medical experts; but instead by groups such as National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML) and the Drug Policy Foundation (DPF). These organizations have little medical expertise and favor various forms of legalizing illicit drugs.

**FACT:** Pro-legalization organizations have admitted that their strategy to legalize marijuana begins with legitimizing smoking marijuana as a medicine. As reported in HIGH TIMES magazine, the Director of NORML expressly stated that the medicinal use of marijuana is an integral part of the strategy to legalize marijuana. Tony Serra, a criminal defense attorney associated with the pro-legalization groups, stated that medicinal marijuana is the "chink in the administration's armor that will lead to society's seeing pot's mystical effects of peace, sisterhood, and brotherhood." He is also the one who

*(continued on page 2)*

(continued from page 1)

said, "if you kill a cop, I'll pay to take the case." and "my sustenance is drugs and murder." A former Director of NORML, Keith Stroup, told an Emory University audience that NORML would be using the issue of medicinal marijuana as a red herring to give marijuana a good name. The Director of NORML, Dick Cowan, is quoted, "The key is medical access. Because once you have hundreds of thousands of people using marijuana under medical supervision, the whole scam is going to be brought up... then we will get medical, then we will get full legalization." Is there any doubt about the motive while they play this cruel hoax on people with legitimate illnesses?

**FACT:** A leader of the medicinal use of marijuana movement, Dr. Lester Grinspoon, is an associate professor of psychiatry at Harvard as well as chairman of the Board of NORML. He has made absurd claims such as marijuana, like aspirin, is "usually safe," using cocaine two or three times a week "creates no serious problems," and "chronic cocaine abuse usually does not appear as a medical problem." He wrote a book called Marijuana: The Forbidden Medicine, which is the bible for pro-marijuana advocates.

**FACT:** The studies cited by the marijuana advocates have been found to be unscientific, poorly researched, or involved pharmaceutical THC, not marijuana. One of their "experts", who testified at the 1987 Federal hearings to reschedule marijuana, was a wellness counselor at a health spa who admitted under oath to using every illegal mind-altering drug he ever studied. Another expert admitted he had not kept up with new medical or scientific information on marijuana for over 18 years. Another doctor claimed there was voluminous medical research on the effectiveness of marijuana, but under oath when asked to cite the number of the studies, he replied, "I would doubt very few." The fact is that there is not one reliable scientific study that shows smoking marijuana to be a safe and effective drug.

**FACT:** The majority of marijuana advocate's "evidence" comes from unscientific, non scrutinized or analyzed anecdotal

statements from people with a variety of illnesses. It is unknown whether these individuals used marijuana prior to their illness or are using marijuana in combination with other medicines. It is also unknown whether they have had recent medical examinations, are just-

*"Medicinal Marijuana is the chink in the administration's armor"*  
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*"If you kill a cop, I'll pay to take the case"*  
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*"My sustenance is drugs and murder."*  
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**These are all quotes from one of the pro-marijuana attorneys.**

fying their use of marijuana, experiencing a placebo effect, or experiencing the intoxicating effect of smoking marijuana.

**FACT:** The main psychoactive ingredient in marijuana (THC) is already legally available in pharmaceutical capsule form by prescription from medical doctors. This drug, Marinol, is less often prescribed because of the potential adverse effects, and there are more effective new medicines currently available. Marinol differs from the crude plant marijuana because it consists of



one pure, well-studied, FDA-approved pharmaceutical, in stable known dosages. Marijuana is an unstable mixture of over 400 chemicals including many toxic psychoactive chemicals, which are largely unstudied and appear in uncontrolled strengths.

**FACT:** The manufacturers of Marinol, Roxane Laboratories Incorporated, do not agree with the pro-marijuana advocates that THC is safe and harmless. In the Physician's Desk Reference (PDR), a good portion of the description of Marinol includes warnings about the adverse effects.

**FACT:** Common sense dictates that it is not good medical practice to allow a substance to be used as a medicine if that product is:

1. Not FDA-approved.
2. Ingested by smoking.
3. Made up of hundreds of different chemicals.
4. Not subject to product liability regulations.
5. Exempt from quality control standards.
6. Not governed by daily dose criteria.
7. Offered in unknown strengths of (THC) from 1 to 26 percent.
8. Self-prescribed and self administered by the patient.

**FACT:** The Federal government over the last 20 years, involving a number of administrations from both political parties, has determined that smoking marijuana has no redeeming medicinal value, and is in fact harmful to health. These government agencies include the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and the U. S. Public Health Service. Their latest findings, as recently as 1994, was affirmed in a decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington D.C.

(continued on page 3)

(continued from page 2)

**FACT:** Since the pro-marijuana lobby has been unsuccessful in dealing with the federal government, they have targeted state and local governments to legitimize smoking marijuana as a medicine. A careful examination of their legislative and/or ballot proposals reveals they are written to effectively neutralize the enforcement of most marijuana laws. Crude, intoxicating marijuana, under their proposals, would be easier to obtain and use than even the most harmless low-level prescription drug.

**FACT:** Major medical and health organizations, as well as the vast majority of nationally recognized expert medical doctors, scientists, and researchers, have concluded that smoking marijuana is not a safe and effective medicine. These organizations include: The American Medical Association, The American Cancer Society, National Sclerosis Association, The American Glaucoma Association, American Academy of Ophthalmology, National Eye Institute, National Cancer Institute, National Institute for Neurological Disorders and Stroke, National Institute of Dental Research, and the National Institute on Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

**FACT:** There are over 10,000 studies available documenting the harmful physical and psychological effects of smoking marijuana. The harmful consequences include, but are not limited to, premature cancer, addiction, coordination and perception impairment, a number of mental disorders; including depression, hostility, and increased aggressiveness, general apathy, memory loss, reproductive disabilities, impairment to the immune system, numerous airway injuries, and other general problems associated with intoxication.

**FACT:** The medicinal marijuana movement and its media campaign have helped contribute to the changing attitude among our youth that marijuana is harmless, therefore contributing to the increase of marijuana use among our young people after 12 years of steady decline.

## RISKS OF CONTINUED USE OF MARIJUANA

### INCREASED RESPIRATORY PROBLEMS

Smoke from a joint and THC have been shown to damage the lungs, impede brain function and hamper the immune system.

*(University of Arizona study)*

One joint causes the absorption of five times more carbon monoxide and four times the tar into the blood than one cigarette.

*(The New England Journal of Medicine)*

Microscopic cell damage of the airway lining caused by 3 joints per day equals the damage caused by one pack of cigarettes.

*(University of California at Los Angeles study)*

### BEHAVIORAL CHANGES

The continued use of THC interferes with the normal function of a portion of the brain, the hippocampus, and the cortex. These are believed to be related to marijuana's reported detrimental effect on memory.

*(Pfizer Central Research)*

### BLOOD FLOW PATTERNS IN BRAIN

The use of THC seems to shut down or restrict blood flow patterns to the frontal lobe of the brain where thinking and memory occurs. Continued use may be detrimental in school age young adults, as this has a direct effect on learning and memory.

*(Brigham and Women's Hospital - Boston, Mass., study.)*

### CELLULAR ACTIVITY

THC has been shown to depress cell division and synthesis of DNA. It has been further shown that it suppresses the immune response of the blood lymphocytes, and alters the structure of the brain cell membrane. Alteration of cell structure in the lung air passages has also been observed.

*(Dr. Forrest S. Tennant Jr. study)*

The overriding objective behind this movement is to allow a minority (less than five percent) of our society to get "stoned" with impunity. This small minority is willing to put our citizens at risk from all the negative and disastrous effects caused to and by those who are intoxicated. What we don't need in this society is more intoxicated people on our highways, in our workplaces, in our schools and colleges, or in our homes.



**MARIJUANA SMOKING PIPE**