

## **“Medical” Marijuana: The Facts**

**Marijuana is not medicine** – Regardless of state laws to the contrary, there is no such thing as “medical” marijuana from the federal government’s perspective. Marijuana is a schedule I drug (under the Controlled Substances Act) meaning that it has no medical use and high potential for abuse.

The FDA has reviewed the scheduling of marijuana several times and has ruled that the raw marijuana plant is not a medicine. All medicines in this country are approved through the scientific process via the Food and Drug Administration, not through political campaigns.

The American Medical Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, National Institutes of Health, Institute of Medicine, American Cancer Society, National Cancer Institute, National Multiple Sclerosis Society, American Glaucoma Society, American Academy of Ophthalmology **do not** support smoked marijuana as medicine.

Marinol, an FDA approved medication with synthetic THC as the active ingredient, is already widely available in pill and other forms through a physician’s prescription. There are over 100 DEA-registered researchers eligible to study marijuana, marijuana extracts, and cannabinol marijuana derivatives that exist in the plant. Two cannabinoid-based medicines, Cesamet and Sativex, are nearing FDA approval.

No medicine is smoked. Marijuana smoke contains 50-70% more cancer-causing agents than smoked tobacco.<sup>4</sup> Smoking any drug is an unsafe delivery system that produces harmful effects, according to the Institute of Medicine.

**Marijuana is addictive and harmful** – Marijuana use is associated with dependence, respiratory and mental illness, poor academic performance, and impaired cognitive and immune functioning, among other negative effects.

Individuals who have used marijuana at least 5 times have a 20-30% likelihood of becoming addicted to the drug and those who use it regularly have a 40% likelihood of becoming addicted.<sup>1</sup>

In 2007, 68% of youth in treatment nationally were there for marijuana use<sup>2</sup>

“Medical” marijuana states are clustered at the top of the list in terms of drug addiction and abuse among 12-17 year olds.<sup>3</sup> More teens have been admitted to treatment for marijuana than any other substance, including alcohol.

The American Psychiatric Association has long recognized cannabis dependence as a valid and reliable psychiatric disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

**“Medical” marijuana systems are overrun with fraud** - 70% of California medical marijuana cardholders are under 40.<sup>3</sup>

“Large commercial operations cloak their moneymaking activities in the guise of helping sick people when in fact they are helping themselves.” Benjamin B. Wagner, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of California

“The California marijuana industry is not about providing medicine to the sick. It’s a pervasive for-profit industry that violates federal law. In addition to damaging our environment, this industry is creating significant negative consequences, in California and throughout the nation. As the number one marijuana producing state in the country, California is exporting not just marijuana but all the serious repercussions that come with it, including significant public safety issues and perhaps irreparable harm to our youth.” Laura E. Duffy, United States Attorney for the Southern District of California.

In August 2010, Colorado Attorney General John Suthers said: "Anybody who doesn't think there's abuse going on has to be pretty naive. We don't have 108,000 people with debilitating medical conditions." One year later, Colorado had 127,000 registered "medical" marijuana cardholders.

**Current "medical" marijuana states are embroiled in legal battles** - States that adopt "medicinal" marijuana programs operate these programs in violation of federal laws, subjecting both state employees and citizens to federal prosecution.

"Medical" marijuana activists have discovered that cities, counties, and states can be forced to surrender to their pro-drug agenda through endless litigation. After spending \$200,000 in a failed attempt to ban medical marijuana dispensaries, Garden Grove, California's city manager said, "They've got more money than everybody to throw at this, and they are just determined to sue on every matter....We feel like we are caught in the middle."<sup>5</sup> In Lake Forest, California, officials spent nearly \$1 million on lawyers in an unsuccessful attempt to shut down more than a dozen dispensaries.<sup>5</sup>

**Taxing marijuana will not help our economy** - Any taxes collected by states or cities on the sales of marijuana (or income taxes on marijuana businesses) are subject to seizure by the federal government (because they are proceeds of illegal drug trafficking), so any "revenues" collected by states or cities are illusory at best. Even if Idaho could legally tax marijuana, any tax revenues collected would pale in comparison to the social and health costs related to its use. Federal and state alcohol taxes raise \$14.5 billion yearly. This covers only about 6% of alcohol's total cost to society.<sup>3</sup>

**Legalization will not control access** - After Colorado legalized medical marijuana, 83% of teens using marijuana daily report obtaining it from a medical marijuana patient.<sup>3</sup>

Around the nation, the abuse of prescription drugs, some of the most tightly controlled substances in our country, is exploding among youth and adults. Clearly, legalizing a drug does not control access to it.

**Marijuana is a significant threat to public safety** - Marijuana is the most prevalent illegal drug detected in impaired drivers, fatally injured drivers, and motor vehicle crash victims.<sup>3</sup>

In 2009, 28% of all fatally injured drivers tested positive for marijuana use.<sup>6</sup>

Teens who use marijuana are more likely than non-users to engage in delinquent and dangerous behavior.<sup>7</sup>

More people driving on weekend nights were under the influence of marijuana (8.3%) than alcohol (2.2%).<sup>8</sup>

**"Medical" marijuana leads to increased use by youth** - "Emerging research reveals potential links between state laws permitting access to smoked medical marijuana and higher rates of marijuana use . . . In light of what we know regarding the serious harm of illegal drug use, I urge every family - but particularly those in states targeted by pro-drug political campaigns - to redouble their efforts to shield young people from serious harm by educating them about the real health and safety consequences caused by illegal drug use." Director Gil Kerlikowske, Office of National Drug Control Policy.

Marijuana advocates have undone decades of drug education in America by creating a popular culture that teaches our youth that "tobacco smoke kills but marijuana smoke **heals**." This is a national tragedy.

**It is exceedingly rare to be incarcerated in the US for the possession or use of marijuana** - According to the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, less than 1% (0.9%) of jail and prison inmates in the US were incarcerated for marijuana possession as their sole offense.<sup>1</sup>

**"Medical" marijuana dispensaries will negatively impact our communities** - In Colorado and California there are more medical marijuana dispensaries than Starbucks.<sup>3</sup>

**Idaho has been targeted by national pro-drug lobbying organizations for 2012** – Powerful pro-drug lobbying organizations in Washington D.C. have targeted Idaho for defeat in 2012. These groups have previously invested millions of dollars in convincing voters and legislators to adopt laws that have brought social, economic, and legal chaos to other states.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>National Association of Drug Court Professionals, "The Facts on Marijuana," December 2010, Douglas B. Marlowe, J.D., Ph.D.

<sup>2</sup>Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, "Highlights for the 2007 Treatment Episode Data Set"

<sup>3</sup>Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America, "Considerations for Addressing Medical Marijuana," July 2011

<sup>4</sup>Office of National Drug Control Policy, "Marijuana: Know the Facts," October 2010

<sup>5</sup>Garrison, Jessica, "Cities Seek an Antidote to Medical Marijuana," *Los Angeles Times*, November 15, 2011, <http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-pot-cities-20111115,0,3370978.story>

<sup>6</sup>Cesar Analysis of 2009 National Highway Transportation and Safety Administration FARS Data

<sup>7</sup>Drug Enforcement Administration, "DEA Position on Marijuana," July 2010

<sup>8</sup>National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Report, 2009

<sup>9</sup>Marijuana Policy Project, December 12, 2011, [https://secure2.convio.net/mpp/site/Donation2?2562.donation=form1&df\\_id=2562](https://secure2.convio.net/mpp/site/Donation2?2562.donation=form1&df_id=2562)