

What are becoming
mentally ill, they start
self-medicating



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What if we were able to legalize a drug that works more efficiently on some diseases than any legal drug on the market today? This drug can help to aid such notorious diseases as AIDS and glaucoma. The name of this drug is cannabis sativa, or its more well-known name, marijuana.

Cannabis sativa should be legalized for its medicinal uses. This paper will state the different types of diseases that marijuana may be used for, the current steps towards the legalization of this drug for medicinal purposes, the reasons for the use of this drug not to be exploited, the positive and alleviating effects of its use, and the non-addictive attributes of the drug itself. There are many reasons to show why the illegal drug, marijuana, should be legalized solely for its medicinal uses and benefits. Marijuana can be used for such things as glaucoma, controlling seizures, arthritis, the side effects of cancer chemotherapy, such as vomiting and nausea, asthma, anxiety, convulsions, AIDS and depression (Cohen, 1985). “ In glaucoma, it reduces the pressure in the eye, for instance, and it also causes a slight increase in appetite in people suffering from AIDS wasting or those undergoing chemotherapy” (Medical Experts, 1997). Marijuana has been widely touted as a treatment for the drastic weight loss associated with AIDS (Levine, 1997). Cannabis sativa reduces the vomiting and nausea caused by chemotherapy, and alleviates pretreatment anxiety.

It reduces the muscle pain and spasticity caused by the disease, but it may also help some patients with bladder control and the relieving of tremors (Facts ; Stats, 2001). There are a number of people who have severe mental illnesses. When they feel like they are becoming mentally ill, they start self-

medicating with cannabis to help them to relieve the symptoms of the illness they are having (Jamaica, 1997).

In the study on rats, a research team from Complutense University and Autonoma University in Madrid found that marijuana's active ingredient, called THC, killed tumor cells in advanced cases of glioma, a quick-killing cancer for which there is currently no effective treatment. The team reports that the treatment works by stimulating the cancer cells to commit suicide in a natural process called apoptosis. The effect occurs in cancer cells but not in normal ones and, they say, " could provide the basis for a new therapeutic approach for the treatment of malignant gliomas". (Rea, 2000)But anytime there is an upside, there is always a downside. The downside of smoking marijuana for its medicinal uses is that some people may overuse or exploit the drug, which in turn would make marijuana a hazardous drug.

Abuse of marijuana can result in medical problems such as an increased risk to the lungs and reproductive system, as well as the suppression of the immune system (Facts ; Stats, 2001). It may also affect hormones, heart rates, and possibly cause bronchitis and breathing problems. But if marijuana is used as a medical drug rather than a recreational drug, than none of these problems will occur. Despite some of the possible problems of using marijuana, it has proven to be a non-addictive drug in many cases. Cannabis sativa is not addictive, because when a person is addicted to a drug and stops taking it, there are clear-cut withdrawal symptoms (West, 1997).

“ There is no scientific evidence that if you smoke cannabis it induces you to take heroine, cocaine or morphine. You find for example that the marijuana user rarely ever drinks alcohol, because alcohol causes unpleasant effects. It is not safe to combine marijuana with alcohol, because alcohol modifies the rate at which a drug or medicine is absorbed into your system, causing unwanted effects and it would make the compounds of the cannabis more easily assimilated” (West, 1997).

Over the past few years, there have been numerous states around the country that have been trying to pass laws that will legalize the medical use of marijuana. The medical use of cannabis was prohibited in 1971, but there has been growing pressure for that to be reversed. The medical marijuana movement began in earnest in 1996, when California passed a statewide referendum intended to make it legal.

Alaska, Arizona, Hawaii, Maine, Oregon and Washington adopted similar laws, and Colorado and Nevada joined them in the November election. After smoldering for years, the debate over medical marijuana heated up in 1996 after the votes in California and Arizona. However, given the federal law against its use, the Clinton administration warned the doctors prescribing the drug would be punished. Last year, the U. S.

9th Circuit Court of Appeals disagreed in part. It said that the law must make an exception for “ seriously ill individuals who need cannabis for medical purposes.” Its opinion referred to this as a “ medical necessity exemption” to the federal drug laws. Even though there have been many moves to legalize the medical uses for marijuana, it has not yet been federally legalized.

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Besides actually smoking marijuana itself, there are many people and many companies out there today that are working extremely hard to find an alternative to smoking cannabis. Marijuana's active ingredient, a compound called delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinols (THC), exists in pill form. But proponents of the drug say it's more effect when smoked, because that way the patients can control the dosage.

Among the companies searching for better ways to harness marijuana are Unimed Pharmaceuticals of Deerfield, Illinois. The company is working on a THC (tetrahydrocannabinols) aerosol spray, intended to offer a quick, easily controllable wallop of marijuana smoking (Jamaica, 1997). In conclusion, marijuana, when allowed, is used to treat such diseases as AIDS, glaucoma, multiple sclerosis and many more. Although some minor downsides of its use exist, its medicinal purposes are much more vital and important. Marijuana's medicinal uses have been proven over and over to be more effective than any legal drug. Therefore, cannabis sativa should be a legal drug, but limited to only severe medical cases. Cohen, M.

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