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AnthonyTabetUndergradPHRM200War on Cannabis            It is safe to say that marijuana use will never be agreedupon; some view it as beneficial, while others deem it as harmful to oursociety. Those who do use it, may use it for different reasons. A person mayuse it for medical reasons, such as for glaucoma or even for social anxiety, while another person may use it recreationally, to “ get high” and have fun. Whatever it may be, people will always have their differences about the drug, which is completely understandable.

Unquestionably, however, its path in thehistory of American drug and medical policy has been unique.            Cannabis remains illegal under federal law, regardless ofwhether it is used for medical or recreational use. The Controlled SubstancesAct, CSA, is the statute thatcreated five classifications that lists substances into categories based ondifferent qualifications. For example, marijuana is classified as a schedule 1drug, meaning that it has a high potential for abuse and is perceived to haveno medical use. Congress passed the Controlled Substances Act in 1970 and wassigned into law by President Richard Nixon, becoming effective on May 1, 1971. Thedrug was classified as Schedule 1, along with LSD and heroin. President Nixon’s motive for this was due to hisdislike of the culture which he associated marijuana with, rather than forscientific, medical, or legal opinion.

On March 22, 1972, chairman Raymond P. Shafer of the Shafer Commission, also known as the National Commission onMarihuana and Drug Abuse, appointed by Nixon, presented a report to Congress thatrecommended that marijuana be decriminalized. During that time, the public heldmore negative views of marijuana, seeing it as a dangerous drug. In thisreport, it was stated that cannabis users were found to be more drowsy, timid, and passive, and therefore cannabis did not cause a danger to society. The Commission’sproposition, however, was rejected in 1974.            As time went on, support from citizens for access tomarijuana for medical and recreational use grew, from activism to petitions.

Moreover, state interest in medical marijuana began to grow in the 1970’s. In February of1978, New Mexico became the first state to pass a law that recognized themedical value of marijuana. This whole time, the federal government had deemedmarijuana as “ evil,” prohibiting its use and restricting much research. TheBaby Boomer generation, unlike the previous generation, realized through eitherpersonal experience or observation of other users that marijuana was notactually as bad as the federal government was making it out to be. At thistime, many activist groups such asthe National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, or NORML, began to advocate for the legalization of medicalmarijuana.

Fast forward to 1996, California became the first state to legalizemedical cannabis. Today, there are 29 states in the US that have legalizedmedical cannabis. In recent years, as even more people saw that marijuana wasbecoming legal for medicinal use and that it was not causing dangers tosociety, more activist groups were started to promote efforts to legalize cannabisfor recreational use.

In many states, these efforts have led successful campaigns; the recreational use of marijuana is legal in 9 states. Colorado and Washingtonwere the first states to legalize recreational marijuana for adults 21 years orolder in 2012. Many are happy about this as they feel like punishments for thenonviolent users are too harsh and simply unnecessary. There have been manycalls to reschedule the drug as many people now believe that cannabis does havesome medical value.

However, no large-scale clinical trials on marijuana havebeen conducted, so there is no way to be certain of its medical value. Ascannabis is still strictly regulated by the federal government as a Schedule 1drug, it makes it more difficult to conduct these studies. Regardless of allthis, the US has come a long way with cannabis- more states are legalizing itsuse, whether it be for therapeutic effects or recreational use.            It is unquestionable that the public has had a tremendous impact on the legalization of cannabis. Public sentiment has changed within the past 30 years; prior to the early 70’s, the public viewed cannabis as a rather dangerous drug, strongly influenced bythe federal government.

Over time, however, as more people began to experimentfirst hand with marijuana, they believed that it was not all that bad, so therewas more public effort to legalize it. In many states, these advocates weresuccessful as those states have legalized it for recreational or medical use. Ascannabis use is becoming more acceptable and legal, calls to reschedulecannabis are being made, but with no large-scale clinical trials, this will benearly impossible to happen.

The path that cannabis has taken to becomelegalized is truly unique. WorksCited