

Anthony drug,
meaning that it has a
high

Government



Anthony Tabet Undergrad PHRM 200 War on Cannabis

It is safe to say that marijuana use will never be agreed upon; some view it as beneficial, while others deem it as harmful to our society. Those who do use it, may use it for different reasons. A person may use 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 the history of American drug and medical policy has been unique. Cannabis remains illegal under federal law, regardless of whether it is used for medical or recreational use. The Controlled Substances Act, CSA, is the statute that created five classifications that lists substances into categories based on different qualifications. For example, marijuana is classified as a schedule 1 drug, meaning that it has a high potential for abuse and is perceived to have no medical use. Congress passed the Controlled Substances Act in 1970 and was signed into law by President Richard Nixon, becoming effective on May 1, 1971. The drug was classified as Schedule 1, along with LSD and heroin. President Nixon's motive for this was due to his dislike of the culture which he associated marijuana with, rather than for scientific, medical, or legal opinion.

On March 22, 1972, chairman Raymond P. Shafer of the Shafer Commission, also known as the National Commission on Marihuana and Drug Abuse, appointed by Nixon, presented a report to Congress that recommended that marijuana be decriminalized. During that time, the public held more negative views of marijuana, seeing it as a dangerous drug. In this report, it was stated

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that cannabis users were found to be more drowsy, timid, and passive, and therefore cannabis did not cause a danger to society. The Commission's proposition, however, was rejected in 1974. As time went on, support from citizens for access to marijuana 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 of 1978, New Mexico became the first state to pass a law that recognized the medical value of marijuana. This whole time, the federal government had deemed marijuana as "evil," prohibiting its use and restricting much research. The Baby Boomer generation, unlike the previous generation, realized through either personal experience or observation of other users that marijuana was not actually as bad as the federal government was making it out to be. At this time, many activist groups such as the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, or NORML, began to advocate for the legalization of medical marijuana.

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

In many states, these efforts have led successful campaigns; the recreational use of marijuana is legal in 9 states. Colorado and Washington were the first states to legalize recreational marijuana for adults 21 years or older 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 have some medical value.

However, no large-scale clinical trials on marijuana have been conducted, so there is no way to be certain of its medical value. As cannabis is still strictly regulated by the federal government as a Schedule 1 drug, it makes it more difficult to conduct these studies. Regardless of all this, the US has come a long way with cannabis- more states are legalizing its use, 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 by the federal government.

Over time, however, as more people began to experiment first hand with marijuana, they believed that it was not all that bad, so there was more public effort to legalize it. In many states, these advocates were successful as those states have legalized it for recreational or medical use. As cannabis use is becoming more acceptable and legal, calls to reschedule cannabis are being made, but with no large-scale clinical trials, this will be nearly impossible to happen.

The path that cannabis has taken to become legalized is truly unique.

Works Cited

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