

Why Marijuana?

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The idea of legalizing marijuana has become one of the most controversial topics and many researchers try to understand if the legalization of marijuana would cause serious health damage and serious problems to society. Due to the legislations about marijuana use are different through out the globe, marijuana use is legal in some countries like Netherlands while illegal in some others like Canada and USA. These inconsistent legislations lead to the question of whether Canada and USA should also legalize marijuana use. Because of the problems that marijuana can cause to human's health and society, marijuana shouldn't be legalized and the countries where marijuana use is legalized should be changed immediately.

Marijuana is known as an addictive drug and causes serious health damage to the users however some may disagrees. First of all, the effects of marijuana use on user's health should be discussed. In the article *Sex, Drugs, and Cognition: Effects of Marijuana* by Anderson, postdoctoral fellow from Olin Neuropsychiatry Research Center, Rizzo , Block, O'Leary, professors from University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine and Pearlson, director from Olin Neuropsychiatry Research Center, a study is conducted "to examine sex differences in effects of acute marijuana administration on cognition in a between-subjects, double-blinded design" (p. 415). The recorded data from the study shows that marijuana has an impact on attention, cognitive flexibility and time estimation. Furthermore, an article *Effects of smoking marijuana on focal attention and brain blood flow* by O'Leary, Koeppel and Schultz from Department of Psychiatry, Block from Department of Anesthesia, Magnotta, Ponto, Watkins and Hichwa from Department of Radiology of the University of Iowa suggests that "smoking marijuana

caused significant changes in [regional cerebral blood flow] that were independent of the cognitive task being performed” (p. 135-148). Thus, Marijuana use can be very dangerous to the users when performing certain task especially driving because it would decrease users’ attention and cognitive flexibility to respond while driving which means serious accidents might occur. What is more, the article *Buying cannabis in ‘coffee shops’* by Monshouwer and Van Laar from Tribos Institute (Netherlands Institute of Mental Health and Addiction), and Vollebergh from Department of Social Sciences, Utrecht University, discusses about “the involvement of organised crime in cannabis cultivation and trafficking and the public nuisance related to drug tourism” (p154). Because Netherlands is one of the countries where marijuana use is legal, “many municipalities situated near the Dutch border are dealing with significant problems because of the large number of drug tourists from Belgium, Germany and France” (p. 154). This issue causes social organization problem which in October 2008, this problem forces the authorities to shut down eight coffee shops in Roosendaal and Bergen op Zoom (p. 154).

Interestingly though, Office of National Drug Control Policy of the United States publishes a book titled *What Americans need to know about marijuana important facts about our nation’s most misunderstood illegal drug* which provides many statistics inside the effect of marijuana use in the United States and busts many myths about marijuana. Marijuana use has an impact on the ability that young people need to concentrate and retain information during their peak learning years. Statistically, “youths with an average grade of D or below are more than four times as likely to have used marijuana in the

past year as youths with an average grade of A” (Office of National Drug Control Policy, 2010). Also, it is reported that “[marijuana] users in their later teen years are more likely to have an increased risk of delinquency and more friends who exhibit deviant behavior. They also tend to have more sexual partners and are more likely to engage in unsafe sex.” (p. 3). On top of that, Leatherdale and Hammond from Department of Health Studies and Gerontology, University of Waterloo from Population Health Research Group, University of Waterloo publish an article *Alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco use patterns among youth in Canada* which shows interesting result about marijuana use. Base on the result of the study in the article, it is suggested that “alcohol may be on the rise at the same time as tobacco and marijuana use appears to be falling among youth” (p. 368). Because marijuana is illegal in Canada, it discourages youth from using marijuana therefore the rate of marijuana use among youth is declining.

On the other hand, Sewell, Poling and Sofuoglu from VA Connecticut Healthcare/ Yale University School of Medicine, West Haven, Connecticut write an article, *The Effect of Cannabis Compared with Alcohol on Driving* which suggests that there is no persuading proof to show that cannabis use may lead to unsafe driving. The article points out that epidemiological studies have been inconsistent and have not resolved the question. The fact that people who use marijuana are young risk taking males which are same as those people who often happen to be in traffic accident suggests that those young risk taking males are already risking themselves while driving even without using marijuana.

Base on the information above which is taken from different sources, it is obvious that marijuana use causes so much trouble to human's health and especially it damages social structure of the society. Marijuana can be considered as a type of addictive drug that is similar to tobacco. However, tobacco has been giving problem to humanity for decades by killing millions of people and polluting the environment, so why should marijuana, which is similar but worse than tobacco, be legalized? Since we try to ban and stop tobacco use to save lives and to have a clean living environment, why should we add another kind of drug into the problem that we currently try to solve? Also, because Canada illegals marijuana use, the percentage of marijuana users are declining while Netherlands where marijuana use is perfectly legal, it has become a destination for drug tourists who seek pleasure. This issue cause many troubles to local Dutch people. Therefore, marijuana should not be legalized. The following part of the paper will attempt to understand why do people use marijuana and propose various solutions that might be able to solve the problem.

In the article *Marijuana motives: Young adults' reasons for using marijuana* by Lee and Neighbors from Department of Psychiatry and behavioral sciences and Woods from Department of Psychology of University of Washington, it is suggested that enjoyment and fun motives are the most reported cause followed by conformity, experimentation, social enhancement, boredom and relaxation. This information shows that young adults tend to start using marijuana because they want to try something new and to fit with their friends who are marijuana users (p. 1391). Also stated in the article *Commentary on "Understanding the Motivations for Recreational Marijuana Use Among Adult*

Canadians by Johnson from National Development and Research Institutes, Inc., New York, that many marijuana users report that they use marijuana to “relax and wind down and to enhance the experiences of engaging in other activities.” (p.585-586). Johnson also points out that marijuana users tend to use marijuana while socializing with other people. A few marijuana users also report that marijuana can help heighten their sensations, particularly in the arts. “Musicians, artists, and others reported in considerable detail their belief that performance was improved while using cannabis” (p. 586). People continue to risk their health to raise the bar of their professions which leads to a belief that people are not quite aware of the danger that marijuana can do to the users.

Much research has been done in order to try to find solution of helping people quit or avoid marijuana use. For example, the article *Attempts to stop or reduce marijuana use in non-treatment seekers* by Huges, Peters, Callas, Budney and Livingston from Departments of Psychiatry and psychology, department of medical Biostatistics of University of Vermont and Department of Psychiatry and behavioral sciences of University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences explains that “treatment programs will need to be very flexible” (p. 183) because it is found that “many users appear to fluctuate often among intended abstinence, intended reduction, unintended abstinence/reduction and continued use, even over a short time frame” (p. 183). Moreover, the article *Quitting Among Non-Treatment-Seeking Marijuana Users: Reasons and Changes in Other Substance Use* by Cospersino, Boyd, Huestis, Heishman and Gorelick from Department of Healthy & Human Services, Baltimore, Maryland and Tashkin and Simmons from

Department of Medicine of David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, Los Angeles, California shows that reasons for quitting marijuana use reported by adults are different from those by adolescents (p. 301). Adults “concerns about the negative impact of marijuana use on one’s health and on self- and social image” (p. 301) whereas reasons for quitting reported by adolescents are “to avoid legal trouble, obtain a job or prevent vocational problems, and avoid a positive drug test” (p. 301).

Base on these two articles, it is suggested that there should be more attentions paid to marijuana use problem because base on my personal experience with a few friends who are marijuana users, marijuana is illegal in Canada but usually unenforced. Marijuana users in Canada usually get away with using marijuana in public without any heavy penalty. The government also need to consider this matter and to have a flexible treatment program for marijuana users. Special ad campaigns shall be used to target artists that use marijuana. These ad campaigns should remind those artists that marijuana cannot help them with their professions. Because artists have so many fans that they can easily influence their fans with what they do, they shouldn’t set bad examples such as using marijuana. Thus, it is believed that by having ad campaigns that target artists that use marijuana can help reduce marijuana use.

In conclusion, although it seems today that marijuana use problem may get out of control and the legalization of marijuana is still a hot topic, it is obvious that marijuana is an illegal drug for a reason, which it is too dangerous for society and marijuana users should seek treatment immediately.

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