

Different Perspectives about using medical marijuana

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Abstract: If you had severe pain, would you choose smoking marijuana or taking Analgesic? Some people would use anything to calm the pain, even if it's harmful in the long run. On the other hand, others are very picky when it comes to their health and would not use anything unless it's approved and has minimal side effects. Since the 1970s, marijuana has not been legal in the United States. After many years of people protesting and studies recommending it for medical use, it was first legalized in California in 1996. A few states have since endorsed laws that approve marijuana prescriptions for patients. However, the possession of cannabis still violates federal laws that have penalties ranging from fines, forfeiture of property, and imprisonment (Pacula et al., 2002). Although some studies show the benefits of using marijuana, it has many side effects, and people might feign health conditions to obtain medical marijuana prescriptions. Consequently, the benefits of its use should be restricted to severe chronic diseases only. It is useful to understand the opinions and reasons of both sides, whether they approve or disapprove of the use of medical marijuana. Moreover, being aware of different available options allows patients to deal with pain in several healthy ways with less debatable methods.

Keywords: medical marijuana- cannabis – law – diseases – violations -contamination.

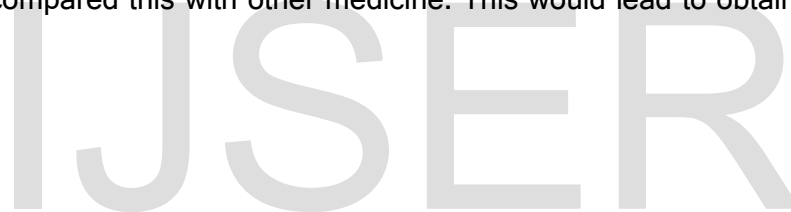


1- Pros and cons of using marijuana.

The first problem with medical marijuana is that the science of its effectiveness is not clear. There is no evidence that supports the beneficial effects of using marijuana in medication (Whiteman, 2015). The studies have mostly involved animals as test subjects and further clinic or human trails must be conducted to validate the medical benefits. Ultimately, biologically active substances have their effects on the body at cellular and molecular levels (Leung, 2011). However, animal studies do not provide comprehensive information about different the psychological and physiological effects of marijuana or cannabinoids on human beings. While the fact might be argued by a few people and

some physicians that using marijuana can relieve pain for chronic diseases, the scientific facts are not clear. Marijuana is only considered beneficial for eight chronic diseases including AIDS, Cancer, and muscle spasms (kondrad et al, 2013) with only 19% of physicians in Colorado recommending marijuana prescriptions.

It would be great if scientists and physicians worked together to approve the effectiveness of medical marijuana and compared this with other medicine. This would lead to obtaining the optimum medical choice.



Hoffmann and others say that the medical personnel, law enforcement, and legal community should reconsider marijuana use by dose to be a monitored at a certain level. Some states such as Oregon, Rhode Island, Colorado, Arizona, Connecticut, and Delaware ...etc. (Normal org, 2015), where a medical license for using marijuana is mandatory, violation is less likely to happen and safety rate will increase (Hoffmann et al., 2010). Meanwhile, the other states allow the use of marijuana with little control such as Alabama, Alaska, Georgia, Iowa, Kentucky,

Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi etc. (Normal org, 2015), so where medical card is not necessary

the use of drugs is not discouraged . Unfortunately, sometimes violations would likely occur even

with medical permission. For example, in Colorado the person who is responsible for caring can use

marijuana with the patient (Normal org,2015). Also, according to drug addiction blog.org, patients

with certain medical conditions are required to register and apply for permission with medical

definitions that vary state by state. Moreover, the physicians might use their authority to prescribe

medical marijuana without the full diagnosis (Hoffmann et al., 2010).

If the majority of studies reach the consensus that a little dose does not influence the mental

and physical status of patients when they use it for lengthy periods, then a legalization of medical

marijuana could be considered. Even though studies show little affect on mental ability with long-

term use of small doses of marijuana, there are many alternative methods of pain management such

as meditation, aromatherapy, hypnosis, yoga, or Rikki and music therapy (Barnett and Shale,

2013). The Mayo Clinic staff prescribes the alternative techniquesof acupuncture, aromatherapy,

hypnosis, massage, and music

therapy to relieve the pain and reduce nausea and vomiting of cancer patients (Mayo Clinic).

Furthermore, in states that allow the use of medical marijuana, there are noticeable increases in abuse for other dangerous drugs such as heroin and cocaine. Thus, people using marijuana at early stage of their life tend to go for stronger uncertified drugs (SAMHSA, 2002).

2- The influences of prescribed Marijuana medically.

Some people wonder why doctors would prescribe something harmful. Doctors might recommend using marijuana because they believe there is a balance between pros and cons. Besides, physicians' empathy toward patients in pain may prompt them to prescribe marijuana to reduce the pain. "Marijuana has been shown to reduce nausea and vomiting and to increase appetite in patients debilitated by AIDS and cancer or in patients who suffer effects of potent cytotoxic or antiretroviral treatments." (Prentiss et al. 2004). According to Anne Gamet, she is an ovarian cancer survivor who started using medical marijuana, it relieved a lot of her painful experience; "I wrote on Facebook one time that I wish I had a miracle pill. This is my miracle pill." (ovariancancer.org,

2010). On the other hand, some studies find that there is a significant correlation between marijuana smoking and cancer. Experimental studies have shown that smoking marijuana might affect lungs in the long run (Zhang et al. 1999). The doctors who prescribe marijuana for smoking have to consider the health condition following treatment, especially for the patients who are expected to survive.

Although marijuana can be used in a way other than smoking, like chewing that might reduce the harm of smoking, there are large amounts of cannabis planted in soil contaminated by heavy metals, with similar cariogenic risk. It might be argued by the other side that farmers can grow the marijuana in organic ways or in clean environments, which will reduce any accumulation of toxic compounds. According to Iskren, a marijuana farmer, marijuana is an accumulator plant for heavy metals or any

toxic chemicals, and thus they should consider the health factors when growing it. Additionally processing, including harvesting and storing might also increase the contamination risk. This was

reported by LaFrate labs that tested marijuana samples from markets and found that they contained heavy metals and microbial contamination of Escherichia coli, salmonella and yeast mold

(Handwerk, 2015).

3- Conflicting views about medical marijuana

People who agree with using medical marijuana refuse this idea and say the effects would only

appear when using marijuana over a long duration. Also, because marijuana has no addictive

chemical, the person can quit smoking anytime. Although the chemical is not addictive itself, the

psychological influence associated with the pleasurable feeling is clearly addictive for approximately

10% of marijuana users. (Blakemore et al., 2001).

If a patient uses marijuana for a long time, it can become abuse, and abusing marijuana affects

mental performance. According to an experiment, cases of judgment impairment and bad behavior

were recorded following marijuana use (Lane et al., 2005). For instance, a study has shown that

car accident risk increased 200% following marijuana use due to the lack of time coordination and

control. (Hartman et al., 2013).

Another way to overcome the symptoms, like nausea and vomiting, that result from drug therapy and that is by using synthetic marijuana (Harris, 2006). Opponents might raise the issue that manufactured marijuana has other chemicals that might have additional side effects in comparison with the natural herb (Every-Palmer, 2011). Although synthetic marijuana is a chemical compound and may have other side effects, dose limitations might reduce any anticipated bad effects. While marijuana herbal form is favorable as a painkiller for some users, the medical efficiency is overrated according to

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recent analytical studies: analysis showed that the effective marijuana ingredient cannabidiol (CBD) that is responsible for reducing pain was eliminated by microbial contamination. Also, farmers' interests are to sell the largest amount of marijuana with the aim of getting a high profit, so they may ignore the contamination and the ineffectiveness of useful substances in plants (Handwerk, 2015). Marijuana use restricting might prevent the random use of marijuana (Keefe, 2013). The opponents think that having marijuana use against the law will encourage the black market trade. According to

a study by Kleiman, legalizing marijuana decreased the black market due to hard competition with medical marijuana, though it did not stop the black market activities completely (Keefe, 2013).

Moreover, Holcomb emphasized that when Washington legalized medical marijuana in 1998, the crime rate stabilized. While restricting marijuana use may increase the black market activity, it can also enforce the mental health and wellbeing of the community by preventing abusive use. The beneficial effects cannot be guaranteed, especially with pollutant and heavy metal accumulation in the planted marijuana, and fake medical prescriptions with black market risks. The debate will not end in this matter, but the freedom of choice in using marijuana must be granted only in severe and chronic cases and with synthetic medical marijuana only.

Conclusion: Although medical marijuana has been legalized, it is still under the shade of many side effects even when used as an analgesic. The question is not whether marijuana can be used for herbal anesthesia, but rather how well its functionality as a medicinal drug meets the modern standards of efficacy and safety. The alternative resources available for pain relief, such as meditation, acupuncture and hypnosis, have fewer consequences. Due to risks of causing cancer,

increasing mental disorder, containing heavy metals and microbes, violating the law and

lost effectiveness due to processing, medical marijuana should be clearly restricted or prohibited.

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