

FACE OFF:

SHOULD MARIJUANA BE LEGALIZED FOR MEDICAL PURPOSES?

Marijuana should be legalized for anyone, in limited amounts

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Medical marijuana harmful, slippery slope to legalization

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First and foremost, let me make it crystal clear so I can't be accused of being biased. I am not a pothead or a hippy. I am simply a 19-year-old male college student. My stance on whether marijuana should be legalized is quite simple: why not? In this day and age seemingly everyone smokes weed, sporadically at least, and I can guarantee that is not going to change anytime soon, regardless if it is legal or not.

Marijuana is a very popular recreational drug. It is by far the most commonly used illegal substance. Research indicates that one out of every three individuals has at least tried it, if not used it regularly. I have always believed that most things used in moderation won't hurt you, and marijuana is no exception.

Occasional use is not linked to any health problems and (despite what some may claim) it is not addictive like other harder drugs. One may become "addicted" to the feeling of euphoria they experience after smoking or consuming marijuana, but there is nothing that shows that a person can actually become dependent on THC, the effective ingredient in the substance that makes a person feel high.

Baron Davis of the NBA's New Orleans Hornets was once quoted as saying that 80 percent of the NBA regularly smokes marijuana. It's evident that the substance is widely used and distributed in all communities, from lower class to high class wealthy suburbia.

Professional athletes are not the only people partaking in the puffing of the magic dragon. People of all ages, from parents to grandparents, smoke, and the majority of kids have smoked by the time they have graduated high school, and if not by then, almost certainly will experiment with it in college.

There is controversy over whether the drug should be used to combat some medical conditions. Included are the effects from chemotherapy, predominantly nausea. I believe that if it does help in alleviating pain and other effects of serious ailments that people should be allowed to have a prescription for it. I propose this idea, the way marijuana should be handled from now on: It should be legalized in all 50 states, whether for medicinal or recreational purposes.

There will be some restrictions however, because as I said, I am a firm believer in moderation. There should be a limit of an eighth of an ounce per person, and all the same rules as alcohol should apply.

If marijuana were to be legalized, it would reduce the black market, thereby negating a lot of the violence associated with it. The crime rate most certainly would be lowered in all communities. The government could even tax the sale of marijuana and use the income to lower the national debt!

What it comes down to is this. Plain and simply, people are not going to stop smoking 'dro. The U.S. government can place restrictions on it, but really what are they accomplishing? The war on drugs is a losing battle, and the emphasis really shouldn't be on outlawing marijuana. Other harder drugs such as cocaine and meth are the real killers. Marijuana should definitely be legalized for people who intend on using it for medicinal purposes and have the consent of their physician.

They might as well legalize it completely, though. Looking at the big picture, it really doesn't matter because Americans are going to continue to light up, whether the government likes it or not.

Using marijuana damages the brain, heart, lungs, and immune system. It impairs learning and interferes with memory, perception, and judgment. Smoked marijuana contains cancer-causing compounds and has been implicated in a high percentage of automobile crashes and workplace accidents."

That quote was from Dr. John Walters, director of the U.S. Office of National Drug Control. Yet here we are saying marijuana is a cure.

A cure for what? Pain? Really, medical marijuana creates more pain.

If you want a pain killer, there are better medications out there. Besides, there is no proof that smoked marijuana is superior to currently available therapies.

Yes, marijuana does help with the pain, but it also is very hazardous to the human body.

Marijuana cigarettes carry more cancerous tars than that of tobacco cigarettes, but we consider the drug to be medicine? Give me a break.

It would be like Advil giving us a cancer-plagued pill to keep your little toothy from hurting. The pill gives you lung cancer and a month to live. But at least your tooth doesn't hurt anymore.

What we should be doing is concentrating on coming up with a better cure to pain. Medical marijuana simply doesn't get it done. In fact, it would take eight to 10 marijuana cigarettes a day to keep down the pain to a satisfactory level.

That's a lot of pot each day, so who's paying for it? That would be the taxpayers.

Citizens and companies would be taxed to pay for medical marijuana, the unproven medicine. Why be taxed for a drug that we don't want around our children, when our tax dollars could be going to a better cause, such as our education system?

The fact is a person infected with a disease needs help, not a joint. In fact, 77 percent of current illicit drug users use marijuana.

Even more troubling, 60 percent of teens who use marijuana at the age of 15 move on to cocaine.

So why would we give the sick a drug proven to give people a stepping-stone to more powerful and lethal drugs such as coke, or our featured topic, meth.

If anything, medical marijuana is more of a burden than a cure to victims of diseases. One burden is the fact that marijuana is addictive.

Patients would grow dependent on the drug to the point where their immune system would become ineffective and useless, unable to defend itself against the source of the illness, according to the Institute of Medicine.

Ultimately, marijuana kills the body as it eases the pain for an ailing person.

The Institute of Medicine stated that "the effects of cannabinoids (marijuana) studies are generally modest, and in most cases, there are more effective medications currently available." IOM also concluded "there is little or no future in smoked marijuana as a medically approved medication."

So what's all the hype about if marijuana hasn't been proven to work? I think Dr. William J. Bennett says it best.

"Medicalization is a code word for legalization," he said, "something that Americans fortunately still oppose in large, though slightly decreasing, numbers."

Maybe people aren't thinking of medical marijuana in medical terms.



Student Poll

Should medical marijuana be legalized with a prescription?



"Yes, because it has legitimate medical purposes."
David Stark



"Yes, but it should be difficult to obtain a prescription."
Mike Miller



"Yes, it's a natural alternative to addictive pain relievers."
Liz Soots



"No, it makes you stupid."
Peter Morrow



"If it helps them, it's their right thing to do."
Ryan Hansen



"No. They can find other ways to treat illnesses besides illegal drugs."
Reggie Stegmeier

This week's poll compiled by Laura Cameron.