

HEALTH MATTERS

New Machine Dispenses Medical Marijuana

Vending device created for patients

(AP) — Los Angeles patients suffering from chronic pain, loss of appetite and other ailments that marijuana is said to alleviate can get their pot with a dose of convenience at the Herbal Nutrition Center, where a large machine will dole out the drug around the clock.

"Convenient access, lower prices, safety, anonymity," inventor and owner Vincent Mehdizadeh said, extolling the benefits of the machine.

But federal drug agents say the invention may need unplugging.

"Somebody owns (it), it's on a property and somebody fills it," said DEA Special Agent Jose Martinez. "Once we find out where it's at, we'll look into it and see if they're violating laws."

At least three dispensaries in the city, including two belonging to Mehdizadeh, have installed vending machines to distribute the drug

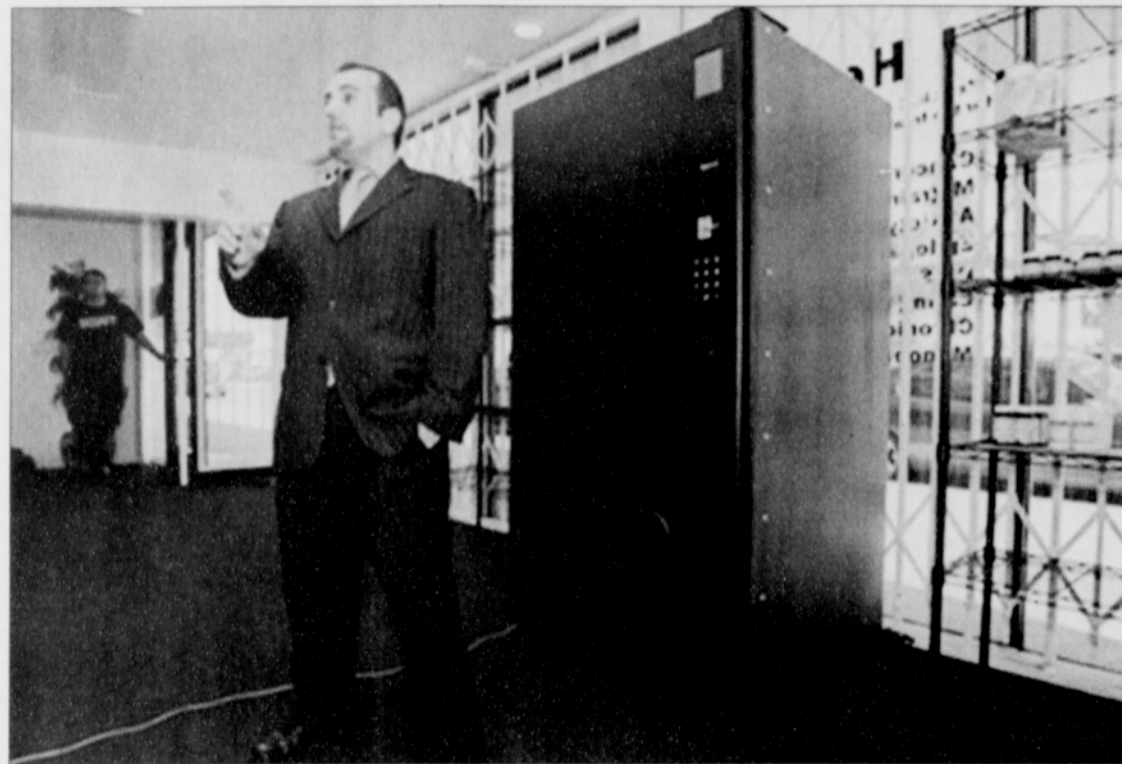
to people who carry cards authorizing marijuana use.

Mehdizadeh said he spent seven months to develop and patent the black, armored box, which he calls the "PVM," or prescription vending machine.

A sliding fence protects the tinted windows of his dispensary, barely distinguishing it from a busy thoroughfare of strip malls, automobile dealers and furniture shops. A box resembling a large refrigerator stands inside the nearly empty shop, near a few shelves stocked with vitamins and herbs.

A guard in a black T-shirt emblazoned with the word "Security" on the front stands at the door. A poster of Bob Marley decorates a back room.

The computerized machine requires fingerprint identification and a prepaid card with a mag-



Los Angeles medical-cannabis dispensary owner Vincent Mehdizadeh poses with his new marijuana vending machine. Bolted to the floor, it dispenses medical marijuana to patients who provide a doctor's prescription, special identification and their fingerprints. (AP photo)

netic stripe. Once the card and fingerprint are verified, a bright green envelope with the pot drops down a slot.

Mehdizadeh says any user approved for medical marijuana and registered in a computer database at his dispensaries can pre-purchase the drug and then use the machine to pick up.

The process provides convenience and privacy for users who may otherwise feel uncomfortable about buying marijuana, Mehdizadeh said.

Marijuana use is illegal under federal law, which does not recognize the medical marijuana laws in California, Oregon and 10 other states.

The Drug Enforcement Agency and other federal agencies have been actively shutting down major medical marijuana dispensaries throughout the state over the last two years and charging their operators with felony distribution charges.

Doctor Warns of Growing HIV Epidemic Impacting African Americans

African Americans comprise 13 percent of the U.S. population and now account for about half of newly diagnosed cases of HIV/AIDS.

"The HIV/AIDS epidemic in the African-American community has reached a state of emergency and there are signs that it is only intensifying," said Dr. Cato T. Laurencin, professor of orthopedic surgery at the University of Virginia.

Laurencin is chair of the W. Montague Cobb National Medical Association Health Institute, an organization dedicated to addressing disparities in health among African Americans.

He was lead author of a report

published in last month's issue of the Journal of the National Medical Association. The study reviewed the current state of HIV/AIDS in African Americans and issued a call for action among clinicians, researchers and the African-American community at large.

"African Americans remain disproportionately affected by high

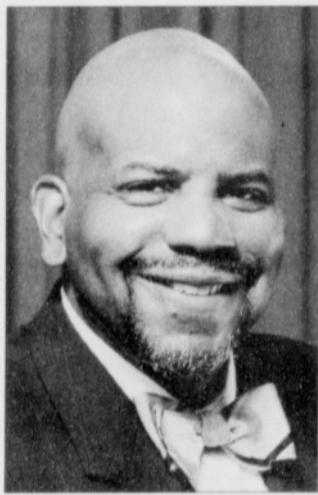
rates of HIV/AIDS," observed Dr. Laurencin. "The intention of our report was to heighten awareness

among healthcare providers and community leaders and to provide information that will help urgently combat this crisis. To be effective, prevention strategies must address the risk factors, community beliefs and healthcare access issues of African Americans."

According to the report, many

factors contribute to the HIV/AIDS epidemic among African Americans. Key factors include high-risk sexual contact, substance abuse, socio-economic status, access to healthcare, and undiagnosed HIV.

Looking ahead, the report called for expanded HIV-prevention interventions and the implementation of new, improved and culturally-appropriate HIV/AIDS strategies. It also noted initiatives now underway at the Centers for Disease Control and urged the biomedical community to be a major driving force in the execution and success of new programs for the African-American community.



Dr. Cato T. Laurencin

Smoking Drops 41 Percent

Oregonians smoked an estimated 2.6 billion fewer cigarettes between 1996 and 2006 as consumption decreased 41 percent during that time, according a report from the Oregon Department of Human Services Public Health Division.

Oregon outpaced the nation by 10 percent, as cigarette smoking dropped 31 percent in the United States during the same period.

Tobacco use has declined among adults, youth and pregnant women since 1996.

"We've come a long way in 10 years, but tobacco use still

takes a tremendous toll on Oregonians," said Mel Kohn, M.D., state epidemiologist in DHS. "We must continue to help people quit and prevent kids from starting to smoke."

Kohn said Oregonians are four times more likely to die due to tobacco-related causes than from motor-vehicle accidents, suicide, AIDS and homicide combined.

"With nearly a quarter of all deaths in Oregon attributed to tobacco use, this is truly a health epidemic," he said. "And unlike many diseases, this situation is entirely preventable."

Are you a Woman with Asthma?

Receive \$50 for being in a

Focus Group Discussion about Asthma

- For African American women
- Focus group lasts 90 minutes
- Portland location in February - date & location TBA
- Part of a research study to develop a computer-based program to help women manage their asthma

CALL toll-free 1-877-366-3119 for info & to sign up

Research study funded by the National Institutes of Health; program developed by Oregon Center for Applied Science (Eugene)

HEALTH WATCH

Parenting Classes -- Newborns don't come with instruction manuals but parents and parents-to-be can learn about a variety of topics from pain and childbirth to breastfeeding to infant CPR and much more. For a schedule of events, call 503-574-6595 or visit: providence.org/classes.

Cancer Resource Center -- Providence St. Vincent Medical Center and the American Red Cross have joined forces to create the first in-hospital resource center providing books, printed material, computer access and more for individuals and families dealing with cancer. The center is open Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Take a Moment for Your Heart -- Saturday, Feb. 9, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., the Clackamas Town Center, will host this free expo with blood pressure checks and expert advice to improve the health of your heart.

Stroke Alert Screening -- Check your carotid arteries with a painless ultrasound to assess your risk. Fee \$40. To schedule a screening, call 503-251-6137.

Newborn Care -- Saturday, Feb. 16, from noon to 5 p.m., expectant parents will learn tips and techniques for caring for their newborn; \$45 fee per couple. To register, call 503-574-6595.

Feeling Forgetful; Women and Memory Loss -- Monday, Feb. 11, from 7 to 8:30 p.m., a neurologist will help women to sort out simple memory loss from something possibly more serious at this free women's wellness forum. For information on additional location and times and to register, call 503-574-6595.

Food for Life: A Cooking and Nutrition Series -- Learn about the influence of diet on cancer, including cooking demonstrations, food samples and more. This four-part series begins Thursday, Feb. 21 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. To register, call 503-256-4000.

For Big Brothers & Big Sister-To-Be -- Saturday, Feb. 16, from 10 to 11 a.m., special sibling class for children ages 3 to 6 helping to prepare for their role as an older sibling; \$20 fee (2 adults, 1 child). To register, call 503-574-6595.

Bereavement Support Groups -- Free, confidential group meetings for those who have experienced the death of a loved one offered on various nights and locations. For information and registration, contact 503-215-4622.

Smoke-Free Support Group -- meets Mondays, 7 to 8 p.m. For more information, call 503-256-4000.

Vegetarian Starter Kit -- Healthy vegetarian eating made easier with informational resources, samples, coupons and delicious recipes. Kits are \$7.50 each (includes shipping). To order, call 503-256-4000.

Free Body Basics -- This physician-recommended class is appropriate for all ages and health conditions. Plan to attend this one-session class and learn the simple guidelines for safe exercises, including stretching. Call 503-256-4000 to register.

Osteoporosis Screening -- An ultrasound bone-density screening with personalized education; fee \$30. To schedule an appointment, call 503-261-6611.

Mammography Screening -- Early detection is a key factor in the prevention of breast cancer. Call 503-251-6137 to schedule your high-tech, soft-touch mammogram.

Maternity Water Workout -- Helping new moms regain muscle tone, strength and flexibility, all in the support and freedom of the water. Call 503-256-4000 for more information.

Tenderfoot Care -- Treat your feet with a soak, nail trim, buffing and massage from a licensed nurse at one of six clinics or at your home. Call 503-251-6303 for more information.

Nutritional Seminars -- New Seasons Market is presenting a series of nutritional seminars at various store locations along with a nutritional help line. For more information, e-mail askthenutritionist@newseasonsmarket.com.

Senior Aerobics -- A low-impact workout geared specifically toward seniors. Call 503-449-0783 for current schedule.

Cardiac-Rehab Exercise Classes -- A medically supervised exercise program for people dealing with heart conditions. For more information, call 503-251-6260.

Leg Alert Screening -- Check for peripheral arterial disease with this safe, simple screening using ankle and arm blood pressure. The fee is \$40. To schedule an appointment, call 503-251-6137.

Bereavement Support -- A bereavement support group meets each second and fourth Tuesdays, from 10 to 11:30 a.m. To learn more, call 503-251-6192, extension 5670.

Better Breathers -- An asthma educational support group meets on the first Tuesday of the month from 1:15 to 2:45 p.m. at Adventist Medical Center. For more information, call 503-251-6830.

Chronic Pain Support Group -- meets the first Wednesday from 4 to 5:30 p.m. and the third Wednesday of each month, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. For more information, call 503-256-4000.

Heart Talk Support Group meets -- on the second Monday of each month; from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. For more information, call 503-251-6260.



Dr. Billy R. Flowers

THE SPINAL COLUMN™

An ongoing series of questions and answers about America's natural healing profession.

Part 4. Stress: How Chiropractic can help ease life's day-to-day pressures.

Q: I hear a lot about stress these days. Just how serious is it?

A: Stress causes high blood pressure, which in turn is a major cause of strokes and heart disease. It can lead to asthma, arthritis, insomnia and migraines. It impairs the immune system and is estimated to cost the nation over \$100 billion each year in lost productivity, absenteeism and health care costs. That's pretty serious.

Q: I have a very stressful job. How can Chiropractic help me?

A: Modern Chiropractic care can help de-stress your body. By helping your nervous system work more smoothly, Chiropractic helps assure that all your body functions (including the ones negatively affected by stress) are working properly.

What's more, today's Chiropractors can also help you with natural relaxation techniques such as yoga, massage and visualization. For less stress, or more answers to any questions you might have about your health, you'll find that Chiropractic is often the answer. Call us for an appointment today.

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