



Cannabis is a Destructive Drug

A major study in Great Britain published in the prestigious medical journal *Lancet* in November of 2010, compared different drugs against 16 categories of harm – either as harm to self or to society.

The study, *Drug Harms in the UK: A Multicriteria Decision Analysis* by Professors David J Nutt, FMedSci, Leslie A. King, PhD, and Lawrence D. Phillips, PhD. on behalf of the Independent Scientific Committee on Drugs, sought to demonstrate that the proper assessment of the harms caused by the misuse of drugs can inform policy makers in health, policing, and social care. For the study, a multicriteria decision analysis (MCDA) model was applied to a range of drug harms in the UK.

Cannabis was found to be in the top eight of the twenty drugs studied, for drug harm to self *and* to society.

The study found that cannabis was associated with some 15 of the 16 criteria of harm.

The strongest negative findings for cannabis were the economic costs to self and society, marijuana related crime, drug related impairment of mental functioning, drug specific impairment of mental functioning, drug dependency, and drug related damage.

Cannabis was also found associated with family adversity, loss of relationships, injury, and drug related mortality (accidents, cancers, etc.)

A secondary finding from this study is that cannabis was found to be harmful not just to self - but also to others. This finding directly contradicts marijuana folklore that cannabis use does not interfere with the rights, health, or quality of life of others.

While the study acknowledged that several drugs were definitely more harmful than cannabis, it clearly demonstrated that cannabis is not a benign substance and is one that has negative results across the spectrum of criteria used for measuring harm, i.e., reducing the quality of life for self, family or society.

Marijuana and Sexual Libido

Marijuana users sometimes report that pot enhances their *desire* for sex. But a review of research on marijuana and sexual health suggests that male smokers could be courting sexual dysfunction.

In one 1982 study published in the *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*, 75 percent of male pot smokers said the drug enhanced their sex lives. However, another study published in the same journal the same year found that erectile dysfunction was twice as common in marijuana users, and other research suggests a dose effect - in which small amounts of marijuana may have little impact on sexual dysfunction but more marijuana makes for fewer erections. Sharon Johnson, a professor of social work at the University of Missouri, St. Louis, has studied marijuana use and sexual health. Her study in the *Archives of Sexual Behavior* (2004), found that marijuana users have both a slightly elevated risk of inhibited orgasms and pain during sex.

In, "Marijuana: Medical Implications" (*American Family Physician*, December 1999), John Hubbard, M.D., PhD., Sharone E. Franco, M.D., and Emmanuel S. Onaivi, PhD., of Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, stated that an altered libido was a neuropsychiatric adverse effect of marijuana use, and both impotence and reduced testicular size were found to be potential adverse effects of marijuana on the reproductive system.

New research in the *Journal of Sexual Medicine* by Rany Shamloul, a physician with appointments at the University of Ottawa and Queen's University in Canada, reflects that lab studies show that THC has an inhibitory effect on the smooth muscle of the penis resulting in an effect on the erectile function. According to Shamloul, this suggests that young men may want to think about the long-term effects of marijuana before rolling a joint, "It's a strong message to our younger generations and younger men."

In addition to sexual performance, men who smoke marijuana may find there is a significant decline in reproductive health. Because marijuana leads to decreases in the testosterone levels, the more marijuana one smokes the greater the risk for complications with fertility and reproduction. In fact, sperm count will be notably smaller in the man who smokes marijuana regularly and may even lead to sterility.

Marijuana's sexual effects are unpredictable, but do include sex-inhibiting characteristics even to the point of marijuana induced impotence.