

Medical Marijuana



The Council on Alcoholism is strongly opposed to legislation that would permit the medicinal use of marijuana in smoked form (MSF) in New York State. The position of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependencies (NCADD) is that science and experience say that passing "medical" marijuana legislation is bad medicine and bad policy. The Food and Drug Administration along with other agencies in the Health and Human Services Department concluded that "no sound scientific studies supported medical use of marijuana for treatment in the United States, and no animal or human data supported the safety or efficacy of marijuana for general "medical" use." The American Society of Addiction Medicine, the New York Society of Addiction Medicine (NYSAM), and over 15 other national organizations are also opposed to MSF. Instead, further research should be conducted under the auspice of the Food and Drug Administration into medicines such as current cannabinoid medications including dronabinol (Marinol), Sativex, and nabilone (Cesamet) – which have shown promise in relieving symptoms of certain illnesses. Marijuana should be subject to the FDA approval process, which includes clinical trials to determine its efficacy as a medication, a position similar to that of the American Medical Association (AMA), which also stated that marijuana in smoked form "is unsuitable as a medicine." For example, the processing of opium has yielded several therapeutic medications, yet no doctor would advise the smoking of raw opium to a patient. Similarly, marijuana may yield several beneficial medications under strict prescription, but certainly not in raw form.

A major study "Early Findings in Controlled Studies of Herbal Cannabis: A Review" (Andrea Barthwell, M.D., FASAM, Journal of Global Drug Policy and Practice, June 24, 2010), concluded that despite the widespread public interest in the therapeutic potential of herbal cannabis.... "the data alone fails to make the case that crude, smoked cannabis should be made available to patients."

Studies from the Center for Medicinal Cannabis Research in California demonstrated that the side effects exhibited by patients in these studies

included adverse central nervous system effects, which resulted in the researchers failing to recommend a "place for cannabis in the treatment armamentarium at this time." The researchers also found that the pain mitigating properties of Marijuana in Smokeable Form (MSF) were not as significant as purported, and other more traditional pharmacological delivery systems would be as, or more, appropriate.

Marijuana, simply, is not a safe drug. According to the Drug Abuse Warning Network, in 2009 there were 376,467 marijuana related admissions into hospital emergency rooms. According to the Department of Health and Human Services Treatment Episode Data Set, in 2008 there were 346,554 admissions of people into drug treatment programs who stated that marijuana was their primary drug of addiction. In a comprehensive study reported in the international medical journal Lancet, cannabis was found to have negative and harmful consequences to self-or-others in 15 of the 16 criteria of harmfulness to self or others studied.

Furthermore, medical marijuana legalization in other states such as California has caused numerous problems and troubles for communities, schools, businesses, homes and families. The actual number of licensed medical marijuana users in California is almost 400,000 - far beyond the "few thousand" projected for true medical need, and the City of Los Angeles saw growth of over 1,000 medical marijuana dispensaries (marijuana cafes.) More youth are using it and it has exacerbated crime.

Many prevention specialists believe that the legalization of medical marijuana under the proposed conditions could reverse decades of sound prevention and treatment programming and return New York to a state of high drug use.

**"The only thing "medical" about
medical marijuana is the name."**

**- Robert J. Lindsey, President and CEO
National Council on Alcoholism
and Drug Dependencies NCADD)**