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## **Marijuana's Dangers to Legalization**

In efforts to legalize marijuana nationally in the United States, supporters perceive it as a health benefit. As marijuana contains medical properties, as its components have medical benefits for patients undergoing treatment. Supporters of legalization see it no more dangerous than other drugs (Doherty et al., 2015). Rather opponents perceive the legalization of marijuana as a danger. As more States legalize marijuana, either for medical or recreational use such benefits cause public health issues. If marijuana were to be legalized nationally, it would lead to increased accessibility, drug use, disorder rates, health problems, and public safety. Despite marijuana's major health benefits, it should not be legal in a national level due to such side effects.

In present day, marijuana has gained greater acceptance in society. Marijuana is a psychoactive dried resinous flower buds and leaves of the female hemp or cannabis plant that contains high levels of THC (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Some individuals smoke marijuana in hand-rolled cigarettes called joints; in pipes, water pipes, or in blunts (NIDA, 2020). The National Center for Drug Abuse Statistics demonstrates that 55 million American adults currently use marijuana (NCDAS, 2023). While half of Americans 78 million claim to have used marijuana at some point in their lifetime (NCDAS). Leading to the increase of public support for legalization by majority of Americans. Studies conducted by Pew Research Center found that 88% of US adults support legalization of recreational or medical use (Green, 2022). In which 10% do not support the legalization, aside of 59% who support (Green, 2022). Marijuana has played a major role through time, data gathered in 1960 by Gallup indicated that just 12% of Americans were in favor of legal cannabis (Flowhub, n.d.) The public's support has failed to understand that such legislations is a dangerous matter.

Marijuana has played a big role in today's society, as policies across States have legalized marijuana for medical and or recreational use. For centuries marijuana was declared illegal in all 50 States before its legalization in 1996. Marijuana is also known as and or called weed, herb, pot, bud, grass, Mary Jane, and several other terms (NIDA, 2021). The legislation of medicinal cannabis initiated in the State of California in 1996. Its main purpose to treat nausea, weight loss, pain, muscle spasm, and serious medical conditions (Conboy JR, 2000). As of January 2023, 21 States have legalized marijuana (.Qualifying conditions are based by States, as restrictions determine qualifying medical conditions, type of cannabis production, whether cultivation or dispensaries is allowed (Conboy JR, 2000) Some States only allow for such medication if approved by a doctor.

Depending on each State's legislation doctors are faced with great dilemma whether to provide prescriptions to patients. In States where medicated marijuana is legal; doctors may choose to prescribe patients with severe epilepsy and chemotherapy. As Marijuana is believed to reduce pain by altering pain perception pathways in the brain. It helps by treating conditions such as arthritis, migraine, endometriosis, fibromyalgia, and minimize cancer treatments (Kubala MS, 2021). Additional benefits of medicated marijuana use reduce inflammation, neurological, mental disorders and sleep management (Kubala MS, 2021). Article titled, "Marijuana Legalization leaves Doctors wondering 'What do we tell our patients?'" argues doctor's lack of knowledge about medicated marijuana. As it is classified under the federal government as a schedule 1 drug, causing increase of questions among doctors. Researchers, Kevin F.Boehnke and Daniel J. Clauw stated, "widespread use of medical cannabis is straining medicine's conventional boundaries, as patients venture without guidance into the unknown and return bearing strange medicines that seem strikingly nonmedical. As physicians and scientists, we

must be willing to do our part by listening, showing compassion, and using the best available knowledge to support patients and keep them safe” (Finnegan, 2019). Prescribing marijuana is unsafe and dangerous, due to limited scientific evidence about the benefits and risks. In the article doctors mentioned the necessity to advocate to remove barriers to conduct marijuana research. As evidence is inadequate and such legal drug is a risk for harm within our communities. Legalizing marijuana is dangerous, as research concerning its benefits and risks has been limited, leaving most doctors with more questions than answers (Finnegan, 2019).

Supporters of the legalization of medicated marijuana reason that the ill are able to find comfort and painless stability. As they argue that studies have demonstrated that marijuana prevents the spread of cancers and diseases. Medicated marijuana could seem the best option for patient's health conditions, but should be education concerning its side effects. Sadly, patients should understand the side effects which cause mental health complications throughout its use. Causing memory problems such as false memories and long-term memory loss (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021) Recent research estimated that approximately 3 in 10 people who use marijuana have disorders (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). Effects arise as Marijuana directly affects the brain, specifically parts of the brain responsible for memory, learning, attention, decision making, coordination, emotion, and reaction time. (Hasin, 2015). Research demonstrates, those who used marijuana before the age of 18, have higher risk of developing marijuana use disorder (Lopez-Quintero, 2011). Such legalization could in part help the ill in preventing diseases, but would eventually harm individuals' mental stability. Statistics of the National Center for Drug Abuse concluded that the number of individuals with marijuana use disorder had decreased from 35.6% to 39.6% between 2001 and 2013 (NCDAS,

2023). It is clear that marijuana could save millions of lives, but increase public health issues in national level.

Legalization would drastically increase marijuana rates, as it will influence in minor's easy accessibility. Marijuana is dangerous to individuals of all ages, including children. According to the National Institute of Health, 1 in 6 kids who ever try marijuana will become addicted to it. Due to the expand of cannabis the young are becoming victims. A study by the National Institute on Drug Abuse found that 21% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders had vaped cannabis in the past year, as head 19% of the 10<sup>th</sup> graders and 7% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders (Pacula, 2020). Addiction is the outcome of such accessibility. Statistics prove that one in every six 16-year-old which try marijuana will become addicted. Article titled, "Public health implications of legalizing the production and sale of cannabis for medicinal and recreational use", conducted a survey on adults and youths' dependency on marijuana. It was estimated to affect 1-2% of adults in the previous year and 4-8% of adults in their lifetime (Hall, Stjepanović, Caulkins, Lynskey, Leung, Campbell, & Degenhardt, 2019). Study has shown that adolescents who use cannabis are more likely than adults to develop dependence, show cognitive impairment, leave school early, use other illicit drugs, develop schizophrenia and affective disorders, and have suicidal thoughts. (Hall, Stjepanović, Caulkins, Lynskey, Leung, Campbell, & Degenhardt, 2019). Marijuana is a danger to our youth communities. As more youths are in treatment for marijuana abuse or dependence than for the use of alcohol and other drugs (SAMHSA, 2010). Future generations are becoming addicted, to what's meant to help our community.

The legalization of marijuana should be a particular concern in a national level. Rather, States are implementing the use of marijuana as a medical treatment under-estimating its danger. Marijuana is a schedule 1 substance under the Controlled Substances Act, which means that it

has a high potential for abuse. Public supporters could argue that marijuana is beneficial for the ill, but don't acknowledge its harm on people, patients, and society. Its legalization in a national level will contribute to issues that will negatively impact loved ones. Health issues will arise, drug use will be abused, disorder rates will increase, and accessibility will cause future generations to fall in addiction. Doctors themselves are concerned, due to the lack of research which has been conducted based on this matter. It should not be legalized due to the lack of research concerning its benefits and risks are very limited in the United States.

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