

Marijuana Should be Illegal

Name:

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Current debates regarding the possibility of marijuana legalization show us that the public is not always aware of all the negative consequences of drug abuse. Though marijuana is considered a mild drug used for recreational purposes it has been associated with a wide spectrum of detrimental effects on one's health both physical and mental. Aside from the harmful effects on health consumption of marijuana also represents a serious social issue regarding the popularity of the drug among young people. This paper argues that marijuana should remain illegal despite the controversial evidence of its beneficial properties.

Marijuana also is known as cannabis is a plant-derived drug that has defined psychoactive properties. The drug affects people through the biochemical interaction of the tetrahydrocannabinol with corresponding receptors in the human brain and nervous system. These cannabinoid receptors have been found in especially high concentration in such brain areas as the cortex, hippocampus, basal ganglia, cerebellum, thalamus, and amygdala. The wide distribution of cannabinoid receptors throughout the brain makes it highly susceptible to the psychoactive properties of the drug. Moreover, there have been numerous scientific confirmations of the negative effects of cannabis on long and short-term memory among those consuming the drug.

When assessing the effects of cannabis on human memory, it is important to note that memory is not a single apparatus but rather a complex neurological system comprised of various subsystems that store, process, and encode information that can be recalled later (Bhattacharyya & Schoeler, 2013). Most of the studies on the effects of cannabis on human memory have emphasised on the declarative memory that requires one to consciously recollect facts and events (Bhattacharyya & Schoeler, 2013). The results of the studies have shown a noticeable disruption

in episodic and working memory caused by the cannabis use. Worth noticing is that occasional cannabis users experience exceptionally strong adverse effects on memory when comparing to chronic users, thus making adolescents a particularly vulnerable demographic group regarding the negative consequences of drug abuse (Bhattacharyya & Schoeler, 2013). Moreover, casual use of marijuana among adolescents and young adults also raises the risks of becoming a chronic abuser that leads to more serious negative effects on memory.

Aside from immediate or acute reaction to cannabis consumption people tend to suffer serious long-term consequences that follow the chronic abuse of the drug. Chronic abusers of marijuana develop long-term memory impairments that tend to persist even after the cessation of cannabis consumption (Bhattacharyya & Schoeler, 2013). In particular, one study had shown that long-term memory impairment tends to persist past the period of intoxication (Pope, Gruber, Hudson, Huestis, & Yurgelun-Todd, 2001). For the purpose of their study, two groups of people with chronic marijuana users in one and non-users in another were given a number of tests to assess their neurocognitive parameters. Cannabis users have performed significantly poorer in comparison to the control group showed severe learning and recall deficits (Bhattacharyya & Schoeler, 2013). However, though the follow-up studies tell that some individuals show signs of memory recovery they have also proved that certain damage to memory system persists nonetheless pointing to a more complex effect of the cannabis on a human neural system as a whole.

Cannabis consumption is also damaging for physical health. Being the second commonly smoked substance in the world after the tobacco cannabis exerts similar detrimental effects on lungs in particular and pulmonary system in general. Over the past decades, a substantial number of studies on chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases (COPD) have shown a strong association

between marijuana consumption and high morbidity and mortality (Tashkin, 2009). Smoking marijuana has been observed to lead to proximal airways damage that does not differ in marijuana-only users comparing to tobacco smokers (Tashkin, 2009). An epidemiological study had shown that marijuana smokers develop lung complications that are also similar to those observed in heavy tobacco smokers. Furthermore, casual smokers of marijuana have higher risks of developing bronchodilation despite the occasional nature of drug abuse (Tetrault, 2007). A systematic review of 34 studies on the effects of cannabis smoking on a human pulmonary system has largely concluded that long-term marijuana smoking is associated with a wide range of negative consequences (Tetrault, 2007). Chronic bronchitis has also been associated with marijuana consumption.

Use and abuse of marijuana undermine academic performance among adolescents and college students. According to statistics cannabis is the second most popular drug among young people after alcohol (Cdc.gov, 2016). Use and abuse of marijuana have been associated with poorer academic performance, difficulties with learning and processing new information. Cannabis consumption is presumed to directly correlate with academic achievements, more specifically, an increase in marijuana use predicts a decline in GPA (Arria, Caldeira, Bugbee, Vincent, & O'Grady, 2015). Some studies had also shown that frequent users of marijuana tend to delay their enrollment or have a higher probability to drop out of college (Arria et al., 2015). Thus, it is possible to say that the use of marijuana is associated with poor academic achievements and as such should not be promoted through legalisation.

It is also necessary to mention the arguments expressed by the proponents of cannabis legalisation. Numerous claims have been made regarding the beneficial medical properties of marijuana and presumably low risks of adverse effects associated with its recreational use

(Müller-Vahl & Grotenhermen, 2012). Several studies have claimed that therapeutic potential of cannabis should be thoroughly investigated and used in a health care setting. However, there has been no substantial proof of the medical effectiveness of cannabis especially in comparison to conventional drugs (Müller-Vahl & Grotenhermen, 2012). Speaking of social implications of cannabis legalisation it is still necessary to mention that any forms of promotion of harmful substances will not benefit the public health.

To conclude everything mentioned above, marijuana should remain illegal as a drug with prominent harmful properties. Not only is marijuana dangerous to one's physical health but it is also associated with serious mental complications. Both chronic and occasional users of the drug have higher risks of developing memory impairments. Chronic marijuana users are also risking to have irreversible damage to their long-term memory. Cannabis is also dangerous to physical health, especially to the pulmonary system. Additionally, the use of cannabis is associated with poorer academic performance and higher rates of dropouts among heavy users. Thus, marijuana should not be legalized.

References

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