

The Topic: Cutting through the haze on marijuana



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In November, Californians will go to the polls to vote on whether to legalize marijuana for everyone, not just for those with ["qualifying medical conditions."](#)

But on Monday, hundreds of medical marijuana dispensaries in Los Angeles began shutting down in accordance with a city ordinance that's attempting to rein in what the [Los Angeles Times](#) calls a "Wild West-type environment."

The [haze may be lifting in Los Angeles](#), but it's getting thicker across the country: Currently, 14 states and the District of Columbia have [passed laws allowing the use of marijuana for medicinal purposes](#). Lest you think patients are blazing up freely, NPR reports that even as more states pass laws allowing medical marijuana, those laws are getting stricter. (See NPR's [state-by-state comparison](#) of medical marijuana laws).

But health experts are still divided on the efficacy and safety of medical marijuana. The nonprofit [ProCon.org](#) lists the ["Top 10 Pros and Cons"](#) on the issue from doctors, medical groups and government officials, including these:

"The evidence is overwhelming that marijuana can relieve certain types of pain, nausea, vomiting and other symptoms caused by such illnesses as multiple sclerosis, cancer and AIDS — or by the harsh drugs sometimes used to treat them. And it can do so with remarkable safety. Indeed, marijuana is less toxic than many of the drugs that physicians prescribe every day." — Dr. Joycelyn Elders, former U.S. surgeon general

"Cannabis smoking is likely to weaken the immune system. Infections of the lung are due to a combination of smoking-related damage to the cells lining the bronchial passage and impairment of the principle immune cells in the small air sacs caused by cannabis." — British Lung Foundation

Illinois is considering a bill allowing the use of medical marijuana for 14 "conditions and illnesses." But [according to the Chicago Tribune](#), "Interviews with scientists and physicians and a review of medical literature reveal scant evidence that marijuana is a safe and effective treatment for most of those 14."

Earlier this year, a California research center presented findings that marijuana "can be a promising treatment for some specific, pain-related medical conditions," according to WebMD. But WebMD [added](#) that some experts "worry about the long-term health effects of marijuana smoke."

The core questions that **The Topic** wants to address are these:

Law and politics aside, are states jumping the gun on legalizing medical marijuana?

Should states wait until there is definitive scientific evidence that medical marijuana is an effective alternative to traditional medicines?

Weigh in with your comments and read more about medical marijuana on [Yahoo's Medical Marijuana Topic Page](#).

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