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Medical marijuana: A refresher on the 'medical' component

November 11, 2009 | 10:04 am

When it comes to medical marijuana, the nation's doctors seem to be softening their stance even as local officials harden theirs. All things considered, perhaps a refresher on the treatment and research realities is in order.

Today's [story on medical marijuana](#) by staff writer John Hoeffel begins: "The American Medical Assn. on Tuesday urged the federal government to reconsider its classification of marijuana as a dangerous drug with no accepted medical use, a significant shift that puts the prestigious group behind calls for more research."

And Tuesday's story begins: "As hundreds of [medical marijuana dispensaries](#) have opened this year in a startling rollout across California, unnerved local officials have started to push back aggressively. Many cities and a few counties have banned them. Others have imposed emergency moratoriums. And some have started to sue dispensaries to force them to close. So far, the state's courts have sided with local officials."

Now back to marijuana's uses and potential. This article from health journalist Judy Foreman offers an overview of [marijuana's safety and effectiveness](#) in treating pain, cancer and other conditions. It notes, "There is a growing body of studies, much of it supportive of the drug's medical usage, though some of it cautionary." For more, check out a [2008 L.A. Times Health section story](#) by freelancer Jill U. Adams.

And here's a nice explainer, via the National Pain Foundation, on [how the drug affects pain](#). Plus a look at the issue from ProCon.org. It poses the question: "[Should marijuana be a medical option?](#)"

"Medical" is the operative word for this element of the debate.

— Tami Dennis

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Acetaminophen is one of the most widely used drugs in the U.S. Many patients find it easier on the stomach than other painkillers like ibuprofen and aspirin, which can cause ulcers.

But despite years of educational campaigns and other federal actions, acetaminophen remains the leading cause of liver failure in the U.S., sending 56,000 people to the emergency room annually, according to the FDA.<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,529578,00.html>

Tylenol, (acetaminophen) remains the leading cause of liver failure in the U.S., sending 56,000 people to the emergency room annually FDA.<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,529578,00.html>

Honestly does anybody know of someone who has overdosed on cannabis and needed to have their stomach pumped to avoid liver organ damage?

Posted by: Dr.NosePikens | November 11, 2009 at 10:23 AM

The issue of whether marijuana has a medicinal use is question for science and not a popularity contest. Ephedirin is a good example. The next time you're in a drug store - look around at the safe, accurate, valid and reliable F.D.A. approved medicines, both prescription and over the counter, covering a wide range of illnesses. The Oct. 25 Washington Post editorial, Questions about Pot" says it best:

"More information -- good old-fashioned scientific information -- is needed before the federal government or more states formally endorse marijuana smoking for medicinal use. The Institute of Medicine, an arm of the National Academy of Sciences, in 1999 published what is widely considered to be the most comprehensive study; it was decidedly mixed, listing the many possible drawbacks of smoking marijuana, including respiratory problems, while noting that such use seemed to provide some patients with relief not obtained from pills containing marijuana's active ingredients.

More recently, Dr. Peter J. Cohen, an adjunct professor at the Georgetown University Law Center, noted in a 2009 law review article that reputable studies released in the past few years showed that patients with AIDS and hepatitis C experienced reduced pain and nausea and were better able to tolerate traditional treatment as a result of smoking marijuana. Yet these preliminary results -- as Dr. Cohen points out -- have not been subjected to rigorous testing by the Food and Drug Administration. The reason: A manufacturer must submit the drug for review before the FDA will tackle the assignment. So far, no such "manufacturer" has come forward.

The medical marijuana controversy may be moot in the near future because of a drug known as Sativex, a spray mist approved for conditional use in Canada and the United Kingdom that delivers the active ingredients found in marijuana. If cleared by the FDA, patients will have some confidence that it is safe and effective. Patients have the right to know if the same can be said about smoked marijuana."

Posted by: FDA - Sativex | November 11, 2009 at 01:37 PM

by ms

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The AMA notes that it is not condoning the legalization of marijuana for medical use; it is calling for research for medical use. Some of the news articles have not mentioned this. Without conclusive scientific testing, marijuana is now more available than prescription drugs in some states, especially California. It only needs to be "recommended" by any doctor, after a cursory exam, for any illness, for which it supposedly brings relief. Certainly it is being used recreationally--and cities are nervous about the abuse of this substance and the likelihood that it is getting into the hands of children, just as there are concerns about children misusing approved prescription medicines.

Posted by: Chris | November 11, 2009 at 03:26 PM

I think it's so funny that the google ad I see under this article is:

MedicalMarijuanaCards

Step1: See Our MedicalMarijuanaDr Step2: Go to any Dispensary in CA

Um, yeah. that sounds like a provider who is interested in treating patients. I bet a crackdown on these so-called medical providers would be interesting. And probably not affect at all those who legitimately need this med.

Posted by: sireneb | November 11, 2009 at 03:53 PM

How restricting marijuana sales to licensed pharmacies? That would effectively address the headshop revival that seems to be taking place these days.

Posted by: Christopher W. | November 11, 2009 at 04:52 PM

I have MS.The AMA said smoked medicine is good for MS. Next argument.

Posted by: RevRayGreen | November 11, 2009 at 05:04 PM

Hysterical! Why are you worried about it getting into the hands of kids from medical marijuana collectives?

Have you forgotten the branches of the Mexican Cartels that are in EVERY state? The black market will NEVER card your kid before selling them dope.

Posted by: Fred Evil | November 11, 2009 at 05:11 PM

what a shame they attack that beautiful plant for all the wrong reasons. It has so many uses they would not want you to know about. Why because it is good. If smoking is not a desire at the time, there are edibles & drinks. I use the leaves to make a tincture that has helped me to walk. I've been told I need a total knee replacement & was on the surgery schedule in the spring. I chickened out & began using the tincture. 6 months later I am still walking on my own., with my own knees. When I run out of it. My knees let me know it in about 5 days.

Posted by: frances gallman | November 11, 2009 at 08:23 PM

'Pot' should be legalized so more time and money can be spent in cleaning up really destructive drugs like speed, skag and coke! not to mention ciggs and booz!
allowing more funding of public education, understanding and better funded treatment centres and staff.

Posted by: ajaldridge | November 11, 2009 at 09:14 PM

half my body went lifeless the other day due to MS. i do not know what i would do without medical pot. i know there are a lot of casual users here, but this stuff is very helpful to those who really, really need it, like myself. this medical grade stuff is helping me make it through iv steroids. it is also helping my stomach, etc. fun times.

Posted by: somedude | November 11, 2009 at 09:24 PM

The University of Haifa has already begun research on the affects of marijuana as medicine.. they found that marijuana helps with PTSD.

Israeli Yohai Gild explains quite a bit in this story..
Marijuana Soothes Pain in Israel: Can It Bring Peace?
<http://vjmovement.com/truth/445>

Posted by: Boots | November 12, 2009 at 05:59 AM

stay strong somedude.....

Posted by: RevRayGreen | November 12, 2009 at 11:28 AM

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I, key word being "I", believe marijuana should be legalized as a whole. But our opinions don't matter to the government. There's tons of reasons why pot should, but won't be legalized. And even (Coming from me of all people) reasons why it shouldn't. But the only reasons that I can honestly think of of why it shouldn't be is because I think some stupid irresponsible people will get ahold of it and be stupid with it. On the other hand, I do think alcohol is a LOT more dangerous, but the MAIN reason why Marijuana will probably never be Legalized as a whole is because it's a lot harder said than done to regulate it and tax it. Too many people will grow it illegally even when or if it is legalized. But I honestly don't see why the government cares what the people do along the lines of drug habits, I mean, they're still making their precious money right?

Posted by: Trey Carlisle | November 13, 2009 at 11:03 AM

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