

# How to Use ProCon.org: A Step-by-Step Guide

(last updated March 9, 2011)

When it comes to locating accurate information regarding important public issues, the World Wide Web has plenty of thinly veiled propaganda sites, inaccurate and unsourced statistics, and often too little information in too many places. Our website, *www.ProCon.org*, is changing the Internet as it works to be the best online clearinghouse for accurate and unbiased information on important public issues.

The following information is a visual presentation of how to use ProCon.org. We have reprinted images from our issue websites and highlighted and explained specific content areas to familiarize readers with several key elements of our sites.

The first portion of this guide focuses on the parent site, [www.ProCon.org](http://www.ProCon.org), while the second portion delves into one of our issue websites, [MedicalMarijuana.ProCon.org](http://MedicalMarijuana.ProCon.org), which we selected over the others because it is our oldest and most popular website.

## I. The Parent Site:

[www.ProCon.org](http://www.ProCon.org) is the parent site, and it functions as a directory to our many issues. All of the ProCon.org issue websites can be accessed from our homepage whether they are **Websites in Development** (less than 80% complete), **Archived** (100% complete), or **Active** (between 80-95% complete).

The screenshot shows the ProCon.org homepage. At the top, there is a search bar and navigation links for RSS, Share, Email, Print, and Cite. Below the header is a menu with links for All 40 Issues, About Us, FAQs, Theoretical Expertise, Teachers' Corner, Traffic, Contact Us, Donate, and Donors & Sponsors. The main content area features a welcome message, a 'PLEASE DONATE' banner, and a '2-Minute ProCon.org Survey' button. A sidebar on the left contains various links and social media options. The main content area is divided into three columns of issue categories: Business, Media & Entertainment, Religion, Education, Politics, Science & Technology, Health & Medicine, Sex & Gender, and Law. Arrows from the text above point to the 'Websites in Development' link in the sidebar, the 'Archived' link in the main content area, and the 'Active' link in the main content area.

**PLEASE DONATE**  
Keep critical thinking alive!

Teachers' Corner  
ProCon.org for Teachers and Librarians  
What We're Up To  
New/Updated Content  
ProCon.org in the News  
Governments That Use ProCon.org  
Our White Board  
Websites in Development  
Suggest a Topic  
Archived Surveys  
Take Action  
Email Updates - Sign up  
Readers' Comments  
Get Involved!  
Volunteers / Interns  
Follow Us on Twitter  
Join Us on Facebook

Welcome to ProCon.org.  
We promote critical thinking, education, and informed citizenship by presenting research on controversial issues in a straightforward, nonpartisan, and primarily pro-con format.  
Our websites are free, unbiased, and updated periodically.  
ProCon.org is an independent, nonpartisan, 501(c)(3) nonprofit public charity.

Teachers and Librarians, Please Take Our  
2-Minute ProCon.org Survey

Pros and Cons of 40 Controversial Issues Español

**Business**

1. Big Three Auto Bailout (archived 2009)
2. Insider Trading by Congress

**Education**

3. Teacher Tenure

**Health & Medicine**

4. Abortion
5. D.A.R.E.
6. Euthanasia
7. Health Care Reform
8. Medical Marijuana
9. Milk
10. Obesity
11. Prescription Drug Ads to Consumers
12. Right to Health Care
13. Vaccines for Kids

**Law**

14. ACLU
15. Rose Bird (archived 1988)

**Media & Entertainment**

16. Social Networking
17. Video Games and Violence

**Politics**

18. 2008 Presidential Election (archived 2009)
19. Bill Clinton
20. Concealed Handguns
21. Death Penalty
22. Drinking Age
23. Felon Voting
24. Illegal Immigration
25. Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
26. Ronald Reagan
27. Social Security Privatization
28. US-Iraq War
29. WTC Muslim Center

**Religion**

30. Under God in the Pledge

**Science & Technology**

31. Alternative Energy vs. Fossil Fuels
32. Cell Phones
33. Climate Change
34. Nuclear Power (archived 1988)
35. Voting Machines

**Sex & Gender**

36. Born Gay? Origins of Sexual Orientation
37. Gay Marriage
38. Prostitution

**Sports**

39. College Football - Playoffs vs. BCS
40. Drug Use in Sports

One of the unique content areas on [www.ProCon.org](http://www.ProCon.org) is our **Toolbar** with links to *About Us*, *FAQs*, *Theoretical Expertise*, *Teachers' Corner*, *Traffic*, *Contact Us*, *Donate*, and *Donors & Sponsors* pages. By clicking on these links, visitors to ProCon.org can learn more about our organization's history, staff, research practices, income and expenses, traffic data, and more.

The screenshot shows the ProCon.org homepage. At the top, there is a search bar and a navigation toolbar with buttons for 'All 40 Issues', 'About Us', 'FAQs', 'Theoretical Expertise', 'Teachers' Corner', 'Traffic', 'Contact Us', 'Donate', and 'Donors & Sponsors'. Below the toolbar, the main content area is divided into three columns. The left column contains a 'PLEASE DONATE' banner, a 'Teachers' Corner' link, and a list of links including 'ProCon.org in the News', 'Governments That Use ProCon.org', 'Our White Board', 'Websites in Development', 'Suggest a Topic', 'Archived Surveys', 'Take Action', 'Email Updates - Sign up', and 'Readers' Comments'. The middle column features a 'Welcome to ProCon.org' message, a description of the site's mission, and a list of 40 controversial issues categorized by Business, Education, Health & Medicine, Media & Entertainment, Politics, Religion, Science & Technology, and Sex & Gender. The right column contains a '2-Minute ProCon.org Survey' button.

Other unique content areas include *Procon.org in the News*, *Our White Board*, and *Readers' Comments*, which appear in the left column of our homepage.

This screenshot is identical to the one above, but with three black arrows pointing from the text above to specific links in the left column of the homepage: one arrow points to 'ProCon.org in the News', another to 'Our White Board', and a third to 'Readers' Comments'.

## II. Issue Websites:

ProCon.org is made up of 40 individual **issue websites** (as of Mar. 9, 2011). Of these 40 individual issue websites, 20 are standard sites that took over 1,500 hours to build. Examples of standard sites include **Euthanasia**, **ACLU**, and **Death Penalty**. The other 20 sites are micro sites which take about 300 hours to build. Examples of micro sites include **Prescription Drug Ads**, **Drinking Age**, and **Abortion**. Some of our websites, such as **Big Three Auto Bailout**, **2008 Presidential Election**, and **Nuclear Power**, are archived when they are 100% complete and no longer updated.

The screenshot shows the ProCon.org website interface. At the top, there is a search bar and navigation links for RSS, Share, Email, Print, and Cite. Below the header, there are several tabs: All 40 Issues, About Us, FAQs, Theoretical Expertise, Teachers' Corner, Traffic, Contact Us, Donate, and Donors & Sponsors. The main content area features a welcome message, a call to action for teachers and librarians to take a 2-minute survey, and a list of 40 controversial issues categorized into Business, Education, Health & Medicine, Media & Entertainment, Politics, Religion, Science & Technology, and Sex & Gender. A sidebar on the left contains various links and a 'Take Action' button. Arrows from the text above point to specific items in the list: 'Big Three Auto Bailout', '2008 Presidential Election', and 'Medical Marijuana'.

Pros and Cons of 40 Controversial Issues		
<b>Business</b>	<b>Media &amp; Entertainment</b>	<b>Religion</b>
1. <b>Big Three Auto Bailout</b> (archived 2009)	16. <b>Social Networking</b>	30. <b>Under God in the Pledge</b>
2. <b>Insider Trading by Congress</b>	17. <b>Video Games and Violence</b>	<b>Science &amp; Technology</b>
<b>Education</b>	<b>Politics</b>	31. <b>Alternative Energy vs. Fossil Fuels</b>
3. <b>Teacher Tenure</b>	18. <b>2008 Presidential Election</b> (archived 2009)	32. <b>Cell Phones</b>
<b>Health &amp; Medicine</b>	19. <b>Bill Clinton</b>	33. <b>Climate Change</b>
4. <b>Abortion</b>	20. <b>Concealed Handguns</b>	34. <b>Nuclear Power</b> (archived 1988)
5. <b>D.A.R.E.</b>	21. <b>Death Penalty</b>	35. <b>Voting Machines</b>
6. <b>Euthanasia</b>	22. <b>Drinking Age</b>	<b>Sex &amp; Gender</b>
7. <b>Health Care Reform</b>	23. <b>Felon Voting</b>	36. <b>Born Gay? Origins of Sexual Orientation</b>
8. <b>Medical Marijuana</b>	24. <b>Illegal Immigration</b>	37. <b>Gay Marriage</b>

Examples of key elements from our issue websites will be taken from **Medical Marijuana.ProCon.org** since that website is the oldest and most popular of the ProCon.org websites, so please assume that we just clicked on the Medical Marijuana link above.

Each issue website divides the controversial issue at hand into a number of information categories including **Featured Resources (A)**, **Main Issues (B)**, **Questions (C)**, and **Biographies (D)**.

**A. Featured Resources:** The boxes on the left side of each issue's website constitute our **Featured Resources**. Those Featured Resources include **Top 10 Pros and Cons**, **Did You Know?** and **unique proprietary Projects** of charts, maps, or other data created for the particular issue website (a description of each section appears below).

The screenshot shows the Medical Marijuana ProCon.org website. The main article is titled "Should marijuana be a medical option?". The page features a navigation bar with links like "All 40 Issues", "About Us", "FAQs", "Theoretical Expertise", "Teachers' Corner", "Traffic", "Contact Us", "Donate", and "Donors & Sponsors". A sidebar on the left contains a "PLEASE DONATE" box and a "Medical Marijuana Home" section with links to "Featured Resources", "Top 10 Pros and Cons", "Did You Know?", "Historical Timeline", and "+Pros & Cons by Category". The main content area includes a cannabis leaf image, a "Core Question" section, and a "Pros & Cons by Category" section with sub-sections like "Medical Value", "Diseases / Conditions", "Public Policy", "Risks", and "Access to Medical Marijuana".

**i.** The **Top 10 Pros and Cons** section takes about 5-10 minutes to read, provides the main arguments in the issue presented, and should make readers more knowledgeable on the particular subject than 90% of their society.

**ii.** The **Did You Know?** section provides entertainment value by presenting little known fun facts to engage our readers with our complex and important topics.

**iii.** Our proprietary **Projects** contain charts, graphs, maps, photos and/or other information created for the specific issue's website. For instance, the *Medical Marijuana* website has a Featured Resource called **Peer-Reviewed Studies on Marijuana** which contains data on the date/place the study was published, a description of the study, and whether the study was found to be pro, con, or not clearly pro or con.

**PLEASE DONATE**  
Keep critical thinking alive!

- [Medical Marijuana Home](#)
- [Featured Resources](#)
- [Should marijuana be a medical option?](#)
- [Top 10 Pros and Cons](#)
- [Did You Know?](#)
- [Historical Timeline](#)
- [+Pros & Cons by Category](#)
- [Projects](#)
- [15 Legal Medical Marijuana States and DC](#)
- [12 States with Pending Legislation to Legalize Medical Marijuana](#)
- [Teen Marijuana Use, 1999-2006](#)
- [Deaths from Marijuana v. 17 FDA-Approved Drugs](#)
- [71 Peer-Reviewed Studies on Marijuana](#)
- [Opinion Polls/Surveys](#)
- [90 Physicians' Views on Medical Marijuana](#)
- [Pharmaceutical Drugs Based on Cannabis](#)
- [US Government Reports on Medical Marijuana](#)
- [Drug Tests - Methods of Detecting Cannabis Use](#)
- [Major Court Cases \(and Related Docs\)](#)
- [Learn More](#)
- [Source Biographies](#)
- [Glossary](#)
- [Notices Archive](#)
- [Readers' Comments](#)
- [Site Map](#)

## 71 Peer-Reviewed Studies on Marijuana

### Medical Studies Involving Cannabis and Cannabis Extracts (1990 - 2011)

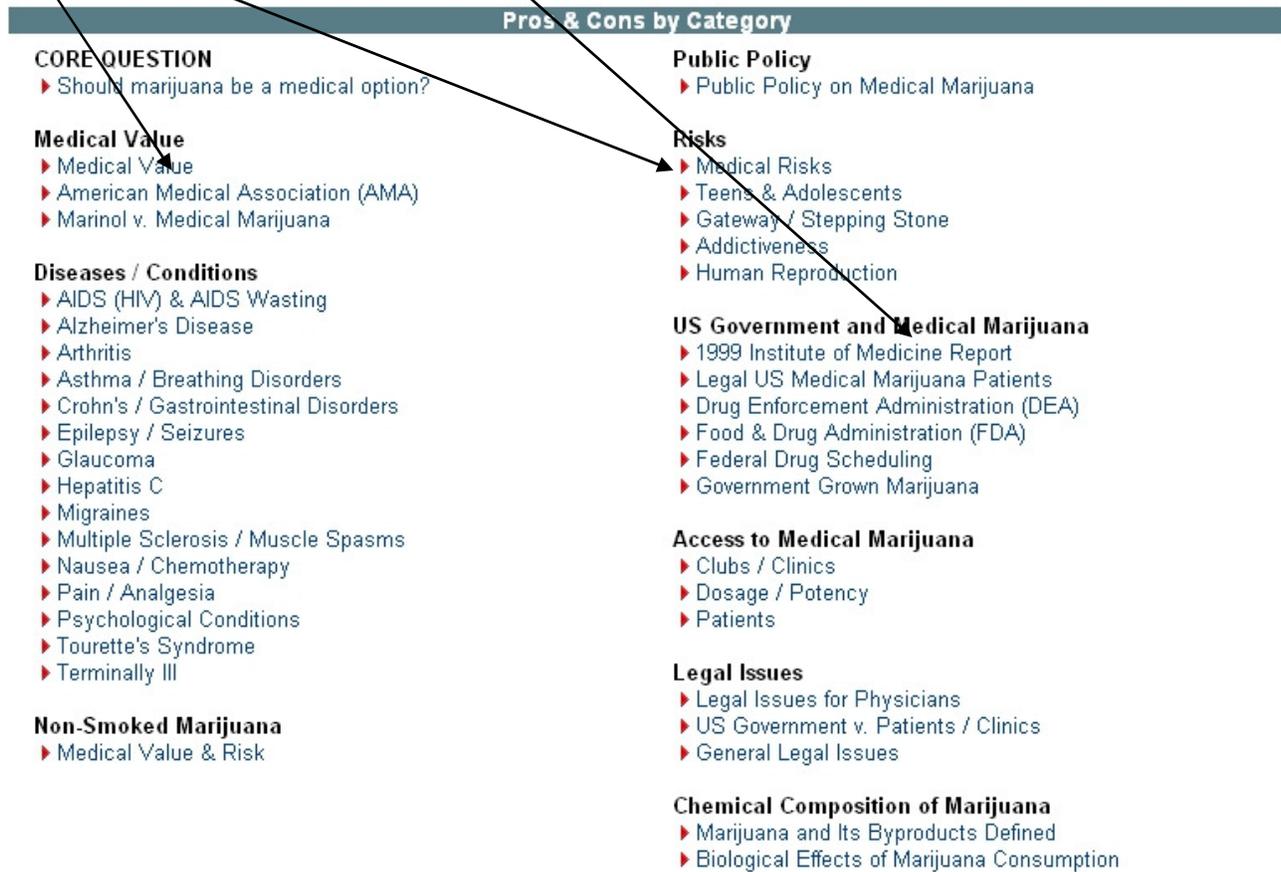
Studies are listed as **Pro**, **Con**, or **Not Clearly Pro or Con**, based on their conclusions regarding cannabis' potential medical benefit. Extracts, such as Sativex, are derived directly from the plant, and are not synthetically created. Studies involving man-made substances, such as Marinol, Nabilone, Cannabinor, and others were not included in this review. If there are any peer-reviewed studies involving marijuana that we have not included, please let us know.

Type of Study	Pro		Not Clearly Pro or Con		Con		Totals	
	# of studies	% of total	# of studies	% of total	# of studies	% of total	# of studies	% of total
<b>I. Double-Blind Human Studies</b>	12	57.14%	7	33.33%	2	9.53%	21	100%
<b>II. Human Studies</b>	17	36.96%	16	34.78%	13	28.26%	46	100%
<b>III. Animal Studies</b>	4	100%	0	0%	0	0%	4	100%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>45.71%</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>32.86%</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>21.43%</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### I. Double-Blind Human Studies

	DATE / JOURNAL	DESCRIPTION OF STUDY	Pro, Con, or Not Clearly Pro or Con
21.	<b>Double-Blind</b>  Mar. 1, 2011 <i>European Journal of Neurology</i>	Alena Novotna, MD, et al., stated the following in their Mar. 1, 2011 study titled "A Randomized, Double-blind, Placebo-controlled, Parallel-group, Enriched-design Study of Nabiximols (Sativex), as Add-on Therapy, in Subjects with Refractory Spasticity Caused by Multiple Sclerosis," published in the <i>European Journal of Neurology</i> :	<b>Pro</b>

**B. Main Issues:** These broad categories allow readers to quickly find the areas they would like to explore. For example, the *Medical Marijuana* site is divided into **10 main issues**, including: **Medical Value, Risks, and US Government and Medical Marijuana.**



Under each of the *Medical Marijuana* site's 10 main issues are several Sub-Issues with more specific subject areas. For example, in the Risks main issue there are **five Sub-Issues**. Readers can click on one of those Sub-Issues to see a list of related pro-con questions.

Projects
15 Legal Medical Marijuana States and DC
12 States with Pending Legislation to Legalize Medical Marijuana
Teen Marijuana Use, 1999-2006
Deaths from Marijuana v. 17 FDA-Approved Drugs
71 Peer-Reviewed Studies on Marijuana
Opinion Polls/Surveys
90 Physicians' Views on Medical Marijuana
Pharmaceutical Drugs Based on Cannabis
US Government Reports on Medical Marijuana
Drug Tests - Methods of Detecting Cannabis Use

Opponents of medical marijuana argue that it is too dangerous to use, lacks FDA-approval, and that various legal drugs make marijuana use unnecessary. They say marijuana is addictive, leads to harder drug use, interferes with fertility, impairs driving ability, and injures the lungs, immune system, and brain. They say that medical marijuana is a front for drug legalization and recreational use.

*[Note: We do not provide referrals to or recommendations of marijuana dispensaries, cannabis clubs, physicians, or attorneys although we do reference them on this website.]* Medical Marijuana ProCon.org is a nonpartisan, nonprofit website that presents facts, studies, and pro and con statements on questions related to whether or not marijuana should be a medical option.



**C. Question:** After clicking on a Sub-Issue, the reader is presented with **several related questions to explore**. The reader then clicks on whichever question he/she wants, and a screen appears with **Pro, Con, and General Reference** (Not Clearly Pro or Con) responses to that question. Responses come from many sources including journals, government reports, scientists, journalists, scholars, or other sources whose information represents the best pros and cons to that specific question that we could find.

The screenshot shows the ProCon.org website interface. At the top, there is a search bar and navigation links. The main content area displays the question "Is marijuana too dangerous to be used as medicine?". Below the question, there are three main sections: "General Reference (not clearly pro or con)", "PRO (yes)", and "CON (no)".

**General Reference (not clearly pro or con):**

- Alex Kozinski, Circuit Judge in the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, wrote the following in his Oct. 29, 2002 concurring opinion in the case of *Conant v. Walters*.
 

"The evidence supporting the medical use of marijuana does not prove that it is, in fact, beneficial. There is also much evidence to the contrary, and the federal defendants may well be right that marijuana provides no additional benefit over approved prescription drugs, while carrying a wide variety of serious risks.

What matters, however, is that there is a genuine difference of expert opinion on the subject, with significant scientific and anecdotal evidence supporting both points of view."

Oct. 29, 2002 - Alex Kozinski, JD ★★★★★

**PRO (yes):**

- Eric Voth, MD, Chairman of the Institute on Global Drug Policy, wrote in a Dec. 3, 2001 email to ProCon.org:
 

"Yes, Marijuana is too impure to use as a medicine and the side effects (examples are dysphonia, tachycardia, motor and coordination impairment, and introduction of contaminants) are too great for the potential benefits for the maladies it is to be used to treat."

Dec. 3, 2001 - Eric A. Voth, MD ★★★★★
- The US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) stated in its online article "Medical Marijuana" - The Facts" (accessed Apr.
 

Mar. 1999 - Institute of Medicine ★★★★★  
"Marijuana and Medicine: Assessing the Science Base" (988 KB) ★★★★★

**CON (no):**

- The Institute of Medicine published in its Mar. 1999 report titled "Marijuana and Medicine: Assessing the Science Base."
 

"Marijuana is not a completely benign substance. It is a powerful drug with a variety of effects. However, except for the harm associated with smoking, the adverse effects of marijuana use are within the range tolerated for other medications. Thus, the safety issues associated with marijuana do not preclude some medical uses."

**D. Sources:** The **source of each quote** is linked to an individual **biography** containing the person's pro or con position to the site's core question as well as information on that person's education, work experience, involvement, contact information, and other relevant data.

The screenshot shows the source biography for Alex Kozinski, JD. The page is titled "Medical Marijuana" and "Source Biographies > Alex Kozinski, JD".

**Name:** Alex Kozinski, JD

**Title:** Circuit Judge in the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit

**Position:** None Found to the question "Should marijuana be a medical option?"

**Reasoning:** No position found as of Oct. 2002

**Theoretical Expertise Ranking:** ★★★★★ Experts

**Involvement and Affiliations:**

- PhD's and JD's (lawyers) with significant post-doctoral involvement in medical marijuana issues and judges who have presided over medical marijuana cases. [Note: Experts definition varies by site]
- Circuit Judge, US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, 1985-present
- Chief Judge, US Court of Federal Claims, 1982-1985
- Assistant Counsel, Office of Counsel to the President, 1981
- Law Clerk, Chief Justice Warren Burger, Supreme Court of the United States, 1976-1977
- Law Clerk, Hon. Anthony Kennedy, US Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit, 1975-1976

**Education:**

- JD, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), 1975
- BA, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), 1972

**Contact Info:**

- Phone: 415-556-9800
- Fax: None found
- E-Mail: None found
- Website: [www.ca9.uscourts.gov](http://www.ca9.uscourts.gov)

**Select Publications:**

- Cowritten with Alexander Volokh, "The Appeal," *Michigan Law Review*, 2005
- Cowritten with Sidney R. Thomas, "Don't Split the Ninth Circuit!" *Wall Street Journal*, Nov. 10, 2004
- Nominated by President Ronald Reagan - confirmed by Senate - 1985

**E. Expertise:** Evaluating a person's expertise is difficult without knowing each person's background, training, affiliations, education, or experience. We feel that a guide to a person's **Theoretical Expertise** can be helpful, so we have built theoretical expertise ranking charts for each ProCon.org website to help differentiate the theoretical expertise of the various sources on our sites. Each source is assigned a **1-5 star rating** based on the expertise they should theoretically possess.

**Medical Marijuana ProCon.org**

Search

RSS | Share | Email | Print | Cite

All 40 Issues | About Us | FAQs | **Theoretical Expertise** | Teachers' Corner | Traffic | Contact Us | Donate | Donors & Sponsors

Last updated on: 11/19/2010 12:01:58 PM PST

**PLEASE DONATE**  
Keep critical thinking alive!

Medical Marijuana Home

**Featured Resources**

- Should marijuana be a medical option?
- Top 10 Pros and Cons
- Did You Know?
- Historical Timeline

**+Pros & Cons by Category**

**Projects**

- 15 Legal Medical Marijuana States and DC
- 12 States with Pending Legislation to Legalize Medical Marijuana
- Teen Marijuana Use, 1999-2006
- Deaths from Marijuana v. 17 FDA-Approved Drugs
- 71 Peer-Reviewed Studies on Marijuana
- Opinion Polls/Surveys
- 90 Physicians' Views on Medical Marijuana
- Pharmaceutical Drugs Based on Cannabis
- US Government Reports on Medical Marijuana
- Drug Tests - Methods of Detecting Cannabis Use
- Major Court Cases (and Related Docs)

**Learn More**

- Source Biographies
- Glossary
- Notices Archive
- Readers' Comments
- Site Map

Medical Marijuana Home Page > Theoretical Expertise Rankings

## Theoretical Expertise Rankings

Evaluating the credibility of one person's statements is difficult if not impossible, especially without knowing, for example, each person's background, training, affiliations, education, or experience. However, we feel that a guide to a person's theoretical expertise can be helpful, so we have built theoretical expertise ranking charts for each ProCon.org website to help differentiate the theoretical expertise of the various sources on our sites.

- I. Our Rankings for Sources at Medical Marijuana ProCon.org
- II. Our Methodology
- III. Pros and Cons of Our Theoretical Expertise Ranking System
- IV. Some Flaws in Our Theoretical Expertise Ranking

**I. Our Rankings for Sources at Medical Marijuana ProCon.org:**

- ★★★★★ **Government Reports and Peer-Reviewed Studies**  
Official vetted reports from international government bodies (such as the United Nations and the European Union), foreign governments (federal level agencies such as France's Ministry of Justice, South Africa's Ministry of Health, or Japan's office of the Prime Minister), and US government agencies (state, federal, and quasi-government agencies including the Smithsonian Institution, the National Academy of Sciences, and Legal Services Corporation) and peer-reviewed studies from academic journals (such as *Science*, *Nature*, *New England Journal of Medicine*, etc.) tend to have multiple editorial and ideological filters, and they normally receive rigorous review from experts before being formally issued.
- ★★★★★ **Key Experts**  
Physicians [Physicians are the "key experts" in the medical marijuana debate because the issue is thought by many to be ultimately based on the medical value and risks of marijuana, and Physicians, with their training and clinical work, should (at least in theory) have the best knowledge of marijuana's medical value and risks.] *[Note: Key Experts definition varies by sites that have this designation.]*
- ★★★ **Experts**  
PhD's and JD's (lawyers) with significant post-doctoral involvement in medical marijuana issues; judges who have presided over medical marijuana cases. *[Note: Experts definition varies by site.]*
- ★★ **Media and Academic Journals**  
Mainstream print, broadcast, radio, and internet media entities such as the *New York Times*, CNN, ABC News, National Public Radio, Slate.com, Seattlepi.com, etc., as well as influential academic journals such as the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, *Foreign Policy*, etc.
- ★ **Organizations/VIPs/Others**  
Individuals and organizations that do not fit into the other star categories.