

Marijuana, Ecstasy and Club Drugs SOC311

Marijuana: A Brief History

- Marijuana has been used as an agent for achieving euphoria since ancient times; it was described in a Chinese medical reference traditionally considered to date from 2737 B.C. Its use spread from China to India and then to N Africa and reached Europe at least as early as A.D. 500.

Ancient Medicine:

- The first direct reference to cannabis as a psychoactive agent dates from 2737 BC, in the writings of the Chinese emperor Shen Nung.
- The focus was on its powers as a medication for rheumatism, gout, malaria, and oddly enough, absent-mindedness.
- Mention was made of the intoxicating properties, but the medicinal value was considered more important.

Recreational Use:

- In India it was clearly used recreationally.
- The Muslims too used it recreationally for alcohol consumption was banned by the Koran.
- It was the Muslims who introduced hashish, its popularity spread quickly throughout 12th century Persia (Iran) and North Africa.

Marijuana in America:

- In 1545 the Spanish brought marijuana to the New World.
- The English introduced it in Jamestown in 1611 where it became a major commercial crop alongside tobacco and was grown as a source of fiber.
- By 1890, hemp had been replaced by cotton.
- Some patent medications during this era contained marijuana, but most contained opiates or cocaine.
- It was in the 1920's that marijuana began to catch on. It was possibly brought about by Prohibition. Its recreational use was restricted to jazz musicians and people in show business.
- "Reefer songs" became the rage of the jazz world. Marijuana clubs, called tea pads, sprang up in every major city.
- These marijuana establishments were tolerated by the authorities because marijuana was not illegal and patrons showed no evidence of making a nuisance of themselves or disturbing the community. Marijuana was not considered a social threat.
- Marijuana was listed in the United States Pharmacopeia from 1850 until 1942 and was prescribed for various conditions including labor pains, nausea, and rheumatism.
- Its use as an intoxicant was also commonplace from the 1850s to the 1930s.
- A campaign conducted in the 1930s by the U.S. Federal Bureau of Narcotics (now the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs) sought to portray marijuana as a powerful,

addicting substance that would lead users into narcotics addiction. It is still considered a "gateway" drug by some authorities.

- In the 1950s it was an accessory of the beat generation; in the 1960s it was used by college students and "hippies" and became a symbol of rebellion against authority.

The Cannabis Plant:

Today, hemp (produced from the cannabis plant) is marketed in several forms:

Acute Effects of Marijuana

- It is almost impossible to die of a marijuana overdose; one of the least toxic drugs known to humans
- Acute physical effects:
 - Red eyes, increased heart rate, dry mouth
- Self reported marijuana experiences:
 - Most (but not all) users report positive/pleasurable experience
 - Used to enhance pleasurable experiences

Chronic Effects of Marijuana

- In 1974, Senator James Eastland conducted a series of Senate committee hearings on Marihuana-Hashish Epidemic and Its Impact on United States Security
- Studies have linked marijuana use to:
 - "Cerebral atrophy" - shrinking of brain
 - Lower testosterone level & impotence
 - Chromosomal damage, birth defects
 - Lung damage

The Effects of Marijuana Use:

- These are not always pleasurable.
 - Dizziness, Hunger, Thirstiness, Misjudgment of Time, Space, etc.
 - Users must re-define these effects as pleasurable.
 - This happens (usually) when a novice user spends time with more advanced users who convince them that these symptoms are enjoyable.
 - Think wine: we all begin liking sweet wine (most of us anyway) but if you ever drank wine with an expert, they would probably teach you to enjoy dry wine instead (or try to). You will not choose to drink dry wine unless they succeed in teaching you to enjoy it.

Medical Marijuana:

- California was the first state to legalize medical marijuana in 1996. Oregon and Hawaii followed in 1998.
- Although in places like California it is perfectly legal to obtain and use medical marijuana, there are still rules that govern how and where the dispensaries operate. Some cities in California have banned them all together.
 - The city of San Jose is currently looking to ban the dispensaries from all areas of the city except those with basically no other homes, business or schools.
- 29 States and Washington, DC have legalized some form of marijuana use.
- <http://www.governing.com/gov-data/state-marijuana-laws-map-medical-recreational.html>

Just for Fun:

Pros and Cons:

- Some opponents claim that the health effects of medical marijuana are the same or worse than cigarettes (some arguing that you need to smoke 20 cigarettes to equal the danger of 3-4 joints).
- Proponents argue that medical marijuana has been used for thousands of years in the far east, and there has been no reported cases of lung cancer due to its use.
- Some opponents claim that the health effects of medical marijuana are the same or worse than cigarettes (some arguing that you need to smoke 20 cigarettes to equal the danger of 3-4 joints).
- Proponents argue that medical marijuana has been used for thousands of years in the far east, and there has been no reported cases of lung cancer due to its use.
- Additionally, the addictiveness of marijuana has also been an issue. Opponents argue that it is very addicting, it is just not physically addicting. Proponents argue that it is not as addicting as people may think. Is it still addicting even though it is not a physiological addiction?
- Marijuana is often thought of as a gateway drug, one that leads to the use of other drugs.
 - Proponents argue that people typically stop using marijuana on their own as they age, and it does not lead to using other drugs.

Medical Marijuana: What it Treats

- For this reason, proponents focus on how medical marijuana can manage pain, control nausea caused by chemotherapy, enhance the appetite of AIDS patients, relieve muscle spasticity caused by MS, reduce intra-ocular pressure caused by glaucoma and reduce epileptic seizures. They rarely mention the psychoactive effects of the drug.
- The government's basis for regulating cannabis is becoming more and more grounded in its psychoactive properties and potential for abuse, because there have been no real indications of health concerns surrounding its use and there has been increased evidence that it is medically useful.