

Tetrahydrocannabinol: The Legalization of “Snake Oil”

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The legalization of Tetrahydrocannabinol/THC is all about the economic impact it will generate in Kentucky. Potential revenue from the sale of medical marijuana is \$200 million dollars annually, a major boom for the commonwealth. Legalization will decrease the money spent on prohibition and punishment. An estimated 553,000 Kentuckians over the age of 12, use marijuana. An overwhelming majority of Kentuckians (90%) supported the legalization of medical marijuana (Kentucky State Information Systems, n.d.). Could THC be the new cure- all-miracle, or is it merely “snake oil”?

According to the American Health Association, some potential benefits of THC are: Pain relief for neuropathic pain, improves fibromyalgia symptoms, increases weight gain and appetite, which helps anorexia/cachexia syndrome, reduces spasticity in multiple sclerosis patients/improvements in pain management of central nervous system, seizures/epilepsy- improvements in monthly motor seizures for childhood onset, drug resistant epilepsy, significant reduction in the frequency of convulsive seizures & treatment resistant dravet syndrome and lennox-gastaut syndrome, reduces nausea and vomiting in chemotherapy patients, modest analgesic for cancer patients, may help with sleep disturbances from chronic diseases, type II diabetes-long term use improved metabolic profile, has potential beneficial effect of THC on glycemic control in patients, very few people with ulcerative colitis or crohn's disease reported improvements, inconclusive evidence that it protects against excitotoxicity, oxidative stress, and restiveness in alzheimer patients, glaucoma-oral administration of THC reduces an increase in intraocular pressure. However, the American Glaucoma Society does not recommend the use of TCH (Page, 2020).

The American Heart Association studies preliminary findings indicate marijuana use is linked to heart attack and heart failure. The case study was on participants who were daily users of THC. The average age was 54 and they had a 34% increase in heart failure, compared to non-users. THC could be affecting the heart through its activation of the sympathetic nervous system, the “fight or flight” response. It can trigger an increased heart rate and blood pressure, which puts more strain on the heart. The number of children poisoned by THC edibles is on the rise (Syal, 2023).

Remember the anti-drug commercial “Your Brain on Drugs”? The moral to the story was that you could fry your brain by using drugs. According to the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Administration/SAMHSA people who start out using drugs at an early age may reduce their IQ by 8 points (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2024). Those IQ points are gone forever, even if drug use is discontinued. Marijuana use by expectant mothers can cause brain development issues including hyperactivity and poor cognitive functioning. Marijuana may cause stillbirth, premature birth, fetal growth restriction, and be passed in breast milk to the baby (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2024).

In my opinion, THC has a placebo effect on people, it is merely “snake oil.” I do not believe that THC use is going to help individuals who are ill, but it will help those who stand to profit financially and economically. THC has been shown to help with some illnesses but it also has profound negative effects on the body, especially the heart, lungs, and brain. While symptoms of one illness may subside with the use of THC, another illness is just beginning.

References

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