



Americans Against Legalizing Marijuana

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March 24, 2021

Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy
200 Independence Ave SW, Suite 701-H
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Dr. Murthy

We are medical doctors, scientists and researchers from the health policy communities, reaching out to you for help. Our nation is in urgent need of public leadership on marijuana. Our country has acknowledged the opioid and vaping epidemic and needs to acknowledge the marijuana epidemic due to its legalization and commercialization. We are writing to you to inform you about the recent science on marijuana use and we respectfully request that you speak out about the dangers of marijuana use and marijuana legalization and take action to protect our children.

Our concerns

Marijuana is the most widely used illicit addictive drug and yet it garners a diminishing perception of risk, even though the research demonstrating its harmful effects is known and rapidly accumulating. In the current environment, marijuana is largely overshadowed by opioids, as communities ravaged by opioid addiction and overdose deaths have summoned calls to action for this form of chemical slavery.

Unlike heroin and other opioids, whose risks are widely disseminated by the media and absorbed by our people, the hazards of marijuana are both insidious and minimized. Marijuana is capable of wreaking havoc on the health, safety, economic strength and cognitive function of our nation's citizens. Yet, for no other drug is the gap so large between current scientific evidence of adverse consequences and the public perception. The gap has been driven by many factors, including major financial investments in promoting misinformation about marijuana safety.

Our politicians have been disappointing in their lack of leadership on this issue, for many have absorbed misinformation without the counterbalancing information derived from the biomedical community. Constituents self-report a positive attitude towards marijuana that cannot be counterbalanced by widely disseminated scientific information. Political leadership and prevention funding have remained weak and ineffective.

The public, as a result, is ill-informed or uninformed concerning the effects of marijuana, including the potential, even in normal human subjects in experimental settings for marijuana use, to trigger idiosyncratic psychotomimetic effects. (H. Isbell et al., Psychopharmacologia, 1967). Research linking marijuana use to the triggering of psychosis and schizophrenia and acts of violence, including homicides, has been nearly uniformly ignored by proponents of marijuana use. Research showing that the chronic use of marijuana has led to suicidal depression and acts of suicide has been largely ignored. Marijuana is the number one substance now found in suicides of young people in Colorado who are 10-19 years old. ¹

It is estimated that hundreds of thousands of male and female users of marijuana are having children. It has been known for decades that marijuana use adversely affects human reproduction causing impaired neurodevelopment, as well as other damage from paternal and maternal and fetal exposure to the adverse effects of marijuana.

No other drug is allowed to be sold in this country without a listing of side effects, yet marijuana is given a free pass. The list of side effects that result from exposure to or the use of marijuana should preclude its use in the first place by all who value mental and physical health. The scientific evidence concerning the harmful effects of marijuana to current and future generations means that its present FDA and DEA classification and status should remain unchanged and that a massive education campaign should be undertaken to discourage its legalization and use.

Marijuana use by parents has been present in child abuse and child death situations. Parental drug use as a source of child abuse is documented in the 2016 Surgeon General's report "Facing Addiction in America." The link between parental marijuana use and child abuse and child deaths needs further research and public awareness.

Many parents are alarmed and concerned about the growing normalization of marijuana in schools, in workplace and at home. This is a social change that has no positive outcomes.

Attached is the recent science on marijuana. We know you will consider the science on this matter carefully.

¹ Go to the below Colorado website and click on the box at the top of the page that lists "methods, circumstances and toxicology" and then click on the two boxes for 10-19 years olds. The marijuana data will appear.

https://cohealthviz.dphe.state.co.us/t/HSEBPublic/views/CoVDRS_12_1_17/Story1?embed=y&:showAppBanner=false&:showShareOptions=true&:display_count=no&:showVizHome=no#4

