

Medical Marijuana

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Marijuana is a drug made from the dried leaves and flowering tops of a plant called Hemp. Its scientific name is *Cannabis sativa*. According to Webster's dictionary, it's a preparation obtained from flower clusters, stems and leaves of the cannabis plant, usually smoked or eaten to induce euphoria. It has a variety of street names such as weed, grass, pot, smoke, reefer, herb and Africans call it 'Igbo.' Marijuana has been in existence for over a decade and it's one of the most commonly used drug in the world to change mood, perception and to get high. Many people consider marijuana as a prescription for illness, to stimulate appetite, relieve chronic pain and to treat asthma. But does its clinical benefits compensate for its effect, which includes respiratory problems, increased heart rate and blood pressure, provoking spiritual experiences and as an intoxicant. Should it be legalized? Is medical marijuana worth the risks of legalizing it? These are the questions we need to answer before making the decision of legalizing marijuana.

As a nursing student and a youth leader, I object to the idea of legalizing marijuana because of its effect on the youth. The youth are organizing different clubs and associations to eradicate the use of drugs and to bring awareness to their communities with regards to the effect of drugs on the society. People of different color, races and religions now donate their time and money for the fulfillment of this motive. Because we believe that if the use of drugs can be eradicated or reduced among the youth, crime rate will also diminish and our schools and our community will become safer. But if the government fails to realize that the future of a nation lies with the youth and if marijuana is legalized it will create more problems for the society and the nation in general.

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There is a lot controversy surrounding the medical use of marijuana even though its advocates believe that it is the best pain treatment. It is also considered very effective in treating the nausea and vomiting that come as side effects of chemotherapy in cancer patients as well as for the restoration of appetite in people with AIDS. More so, its primary active component, delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is available by prescription in pill form, but users say it's not as effective as smoking the real herb. In 1999, the Institute of Medicine, in the most comprehensive study of medical marijuana concluded: "Nausea, appetite loss, pain and anxiety...all can be mitigated by marijuana," but the 2005 Raich Supreme Court decision does not support the legalization of marijuana because of the toxicity of marijuana smoke which is hoped that further research would lead to the development of a new delivery system, such as a bronchial inhaler.

Many research and articles have proven that legalization of medical marijuana is damaging to human health. Researchers have found that TCH; the primary active component of marijuana have bad effect on the brain. According to an American pharmacologist, Williams A. Devane, "TCH suppressed the action of neuron the information processing unit of the hippocampus and the activities of nerve fibers which indicate a change and weakening in the brain for long time usage of marijuana."

I believe the people advocating for the legalization of marijuana have a special interest in it, may be for business purposes. Some people use it while some sell for money. Since there is no credible proof of its medical necessity, it has been found that it is not without side effects while it helps alleviate some of the medical conditions that respond to its use. The office of the National Drug Control Policy has opposed the legalization of the medical use of marijuana, citing law enforcement issues and the possibility that some would use it as pretext to sell marijuana for non-medical use. Because marijuana is yet to be approved for medical use (officially), supporters of this idea appear resolute in their mission to get a nationwide approval.

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A recent visit I made to a hospital practically opened my eyes to the terror marijuana can unleash on its user. I came across a pregnant woman who was in so much pain that the medical team had to do one test after the other in a bid to save the life of her unborn child. This woman's pain got to an unbearable level. At that point, I concluded that marijuana use does more harm than good. According to the doctor in charge, such a child might develop Down syndrome and / or some other deformity that will remain with him / her for life. He further explained that a nursing mother who uses marijuana runs the risk of passing TCH to the child through her breast milk and this can impair an infant's motor development.

I believe the welfare of the people should be the first thing to put into consideration before approving marijuana for medical uses. The adverse effect of marijuana use on the youth and the safety of individuals must be considered before the personal and selfish gains of its promoters. With the right plans such as rehabilitation centers and other programs, government agencies can help bring hope to people who are already addicted to this drug.

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