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# The Arguments for the Legalisation of Marijuana for Medicinal Purposes

Drug addiction is something societies all over the world rarely tolerate. Although almost every culture has a tradition of consuming narcotic substances – alcohol, in the first turn – not all of them are seen as acceptable. A person saying, “A glass of beer after a long working day is my small weakness, you know” looks normal; but an almost similar phrase, “A shot of heroin after a long working day is my small weakness, you know” will sound suspicious, to say the least, will it not? Double standards or not, narcotics are a taboo – and still there are several kinds of drugs that societies turn a blind eye to: tobacco, the aforementioned alcohol, and marijuana. The latter is illegal in many countries, but people’s attitude to it is rather benevolent – more than to any other drug. 5 Besides, there have been talks (for a long while) that marijuana is not only a relaxing, but also a recreational drug, and that in some cases, it can be used for medicinal purposes. The Internet is full of controversial studies, either claiming that marijuana is bliss and should be legalized everywhere, or stating directly the opposite. 7 And although total legalization might not be the best choice, there are reasons to believe that in medicine this drug can be used rather effectively.

To start with, marijuana is not totally illegal: a number of states in the USA (Colorado, California, Washington, Arizona, New Mexico, and 16 other states), as well as several countries such as Netherlands have made it legal to smoke weed. This was not done on the basis of pure fun and carelessness, of course: the distribution of legalized drugs is easier to control, they are taxed, and their chemical compound can be standardized to minimize health risks and side effects. 10 At the same time, numerous studies prove that marijuana – in its medical form – can be beneficial for patients suffering from serious diseases, such as cancer. 11 To be more precise, there are several groups of diseases with symptoms that can be alleviated by marijuana:

1. In case of various inflammations, marijuana is great for treating chronic pain. Unlike opiates, which are better when there is a need to quickly alleviate acute pain, weed is safer and more effective in decreasing long-term pain.
2. The symptoms of arthritis and other autoimmune diseases can be reduced or even eliminated with the help of marijuana as well.
3. Patients with such neurological disorders as multiple sclerosis or spinal cord injuries would appreciate weed for its painkilling effect, and its ability to reduce muscle spasticity caused by damaged nerves. There have been studies about the beneficial effects of medical marijuana in patients with epilepsy.
4. Patients with cancer having to undergo numerous chemotherapy sessions often suffer from severe nausea after them; marijuana can not only eliminate this nausea, but also prevent the spreading of some forms of cancer.
5. HIV/AIDS patients often experience significant loss of weight and appetite – due to neurological factors and multiple antibiotics taken; marijuana can increase appetite and alleviate neurological symptoms.

According to a survey conducted by an authoritative website about medicine, WebMD, American doctors of 12 different specializations approved the usage of marijuana in medicinal purposes. During the course of the survey, more than 1,500 doctors from 48 states responded

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that they would advocate the legalization of medical marijuana to make it an option for patients who need it. In addition, the American Epilepsy Foundation appealed to the Drug Enforcement Administration to relax its restrictions on marijuana in order to conduct more proper studies on it.

Michael W. 23 Smith, MD, WebMD Chief Medical Editor, says that “The medical community is clearly saying they support using marijuana as a potential treatment option for any number of medical problems. In fact, many doctors already prescribe it. But health professionals are still unclear as to what the long-term effects may be. 26 The findings would indicate a strong desire to have the DEA ease the restrictions on research so that additional studies can be done to conclusively show where medical marijuana can help and where it might not” (WebMD). Yet another positive effect that might come out of the legalization of medical marijuana is the decrease of opiate consumption and prescriptions.

The problem with opioid painkillers is that they can cause addiction, and although they are extremely effective in alleviating pain, there have been cases of death due to overdose. The usage of marijuana as a painkiller could fix this situation – at least partially; according to one NIDA-funded study, there is a connection between medical marijuana legalization and the decrease of deaths caused by opioid overdose, opioid prescribing, self-reports of opioid misuse, and treatment admissions for opioid addiction, as well as the reduction of doses of prescribed opioids (NIDA). Although additional studies on this subject are still required, it can be seen that medical marijuana can be a healthier alternative to traditional opioid painkillers.

Drug consumption is always connected to the risk of developing an addiction. Even such “harmless” and legalized drugs as alcohol and tobacco annually cause millions of deaths worldwide. However, in the case of marijuana, there might be exceptions – given that it is prescribed for medicinal purposes, and under the control of a doctor. This drug can ease pain, help seriously ill people alleviate or eliminate their symptoms, and can even become an alternative to traditional opiate painkillers. Therefore, under certain conditions and regulations, marijuana can be used as a recreational drug.