

Marijuana

Introduction

I chose “Marijuana” to be my topic because I believe that it is a problem in our society today. I know a lot of people who just sit back and smoke “weed,” “pot,” and “Mary Jane” all day. It is dangerous especially when driving under the influence of it. Yes there are laws enforcing the consequences if you get caught with it, but I feel that they should be more strict. I have had two close friends of mine who died last April due to being under the influence of alcohol and Marijuana. I was a former user back in high school and using Marijuana did nothing but become a waste of time and money. I am a Social Work major and my life time goal is to be a Drug and Alcohol Counselor. After being a user and seeing and feeling the effects of this drug I can say, first hand, that there is no positive outcome of using this drug.

Section 1: Background and Problem Statement

- **Web site #1 Name:** Healthy People 2020
- **Web address:** <http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topicsobjectives2020/overview.aspx?topicid=40>

- **Background Information:**

According to Healthy People 2020, in 2005 an estimated 22 million Americans struggled with a drug or alcohol problem. Almost 95 percent of people with substance use problems were not even aware and recognized it as a problem. For the people who did recognize their problem, 273,000 have made an unsuccessful effort to obtain treatment. These estimates highlight the importance of increasing prevention efforts and improving access to treatment for substance abuse and co-occurring disorders.

- **Web site #2 Name:** Info Facts: Marijuana
- **Web address:** <http://www.drugabuse.gov/infofacts/marijuana.html>

- **Background Information:**

Marijuana has a chemical in it called delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol, better known as THC. Marijuana is a mixture of the dried and shredded leaves, stems, seeds, and flowers of the cannabis sativa plant. The mixture can be green, brown, or gray. Marijuana is usually smoked as a cigarette, also known as a “joint” or in a pipe also known as a “bowl” or a “bong.” It is also smoked in blunts, which are cigars that have been emptied of tobacco and refilled with marijuana. Marijuana can also be mixed in food or brewed as a tea, also known as “weed tea.” Scientists have learned a great deal about how THC acts in the brain to produce its many effects. When someone smokes marijuana, THC rapidly passes from the lungs into the bloodstream, which carries the chemical to the brain and other organs throughout the body. THC acts upon specific sites

in the brain, called cannabinoid receptors, kicking off a series of cellular reactions that ultimately lead to the "high" that users experience when they smoke marijuana. Some brain areas have many cannabinoid receptors; others have few or none. The highest density of cannabinoid receptors are found in parts of the brain that influence pleasure, memory, thinking, concentrating, sensory and time perception, and coordinated movement.

- **Web site #3 Name:** Facts About Marijuana
- **Web address:** <http://teens.drugabuse.gov>
- **Background Information:**

There are many slang terms that people use to nickname Marijuana. Some of the most common names are: "pot," "grass," "herb," "weed," "Mary Jane," "reefer," "skunk," "boom," "gangster," "kif," "chronic," and "ganja." According to an article, certain parts of the brain have high concentrations of cannabinoid receptors. These areas are the hippocampus, the cerebellum, the basal ganglia, and the cerebral cortex. THC interferes with learning and memory which is controlled by the hippocampus. Using Marijuana can affect how easy it is for you to learn and how easy it is for you to remember certain things. Another part of the brain that smoking Marijuana can affect is the cerebellum. The cerebellum is the section of our brain that controls balance and coordination. When THC affects the cerebellum's function standing on one foot, or any other activity that requires balance can be affected. THC also affects the basal ganglia, another part of the brain that's involved in movement control.

Section 2: Research

- **Web site #1 Name:** National Institute of Drug Abuse
- **Web address:** <http://www.nida.nih.gov/ResearchReports/marijuana/>
- **Summary of the research:**

According to this research it is said that by the time they graduate from high school, about 42 percent of teens will have tried marijuana. Although current use among U.S. teens has dropped dramatically in the past, this decline has stalled during the past several years.

This data is from the Monitoring the Future study, which has been tracking drug use among teens since 1975. The World Health Organization ranks the United States first among 17 European and North American countries for prevalence of marijuana use. And more users start every day. In 2008, an estimated 2.2 million Americans used marijuana for the first time; greater than half were under age 18. The use of marijuana can produce adverse physical, mental, emotional, and behavioral effects. It can impair short-term memory and judgment and distort perception. Because marijuana affects brain systems that are still maturing through young adulthood, its use by teens may have a negative effect on their development. And contrary to popular belief, it can be addictive.

- **Web site #2 Name:** U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration
- **Web address:** <http://www.justice.gov/dea/ongoing/marinol.html>

- **Summary of the research:**

Even though when people talk about Marijuana negative comments are mostly made and nothing good about the drug is ever mentioned. However, there is Medical Marijuana, also known as “Marinol.” The active ingredient of Marinol is synthetic THC, which has been found to relieve the nausea and vomiting associated with chemotherapy for cancer patients and to assist with loss of appetite with AIDS patients. Marinol comes in the form of a pill and is also being studied by researchers for suitability for other delivery methods, such as an inhaler or patch. Marijuana that is smoked and not used for medical purposes contains more than 400 different chemicals, including most of the hazardous chemicals found in tobacco smoke. Marinol has been studied and approved by the medical community and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

- **Web site #3 Name:** Marijuana: Facts for Teens
- **Web address:** <http://www.drugabuse.gov/MarijBroch/Marijteenstxt.html>

- **Summary of the research:**

According to “Marijuana: Facts for Teens,” there are short- term effects and long-term effects of Marijuana usage. Some of the short- term effects of smoking Marijuana are: problems with memory and learning, distorted perception (sights, sounds, touch, time), trouble with thinking and problem solving, loss of motor coordination and increased heart rate. Some of the more serious long-term effects are: **CANCER!!**- According to this article, it is unknown whether smoking Marijuana alone causes cancer, but it IS known that marijuana smoke contains some of the same, and sometimes even more, of the cancer-causing chemicals found in tobacco smoke. Studies have shown that someone who smokes five joints per day may be taking in as many cancer-causing chemicals as someone who smokes a full pack of cigarettes every day. Another long-term effect of Marijuana use is that it affects the lungs and airways. People who smoke marijuana a lot develop the same kinds of breathing problems that cigarette smokers have. They also tend to have more chest colds than nonusers. They are also at greater risk of getting lung infections like pneumonia. Smoking Marijuana may also affect a person’s immune system. Our immune system protects the body and fights off many agents that cause disease. It is not certain whether marijuana damages the immune system of people, but both animal and human studies have shown that Marijuana impairs the ability of T-cells in the lungs' immune system to fight off some infections.

Section 3: Statistics

- **Web site #1 Name:** Marijuana Addiction
- **Web address:** <http://www.marijuana-addiction.org>

- **Summary of the statistics:**

A recent government survey tells us that Marijuana is the most frequently used illegal drug in the United States. Nearly 69 million Americans over the age of 12 have tried Marijuana at least once. About 10 million people had used the drug in the month immediately prior to the survey. This survey also found that among teens 12 to 17, the average age of first experimenting with Marijuana was 14 years old. A yearly survey of students in grades 8 through 12 shows that 23 percent of 8th-graders have tried Marijuana at least once. By 10th grade, 21 percent are "current" users. Among 12th-graders, nearly 50 percent have tried Marijuana at least once and about 24 percent were current users. Other researchers have found that use of Marijuana and other drugs usually peaks in the late teens and early twenties, then declines in later years.

- **Web site #2 Name:** Marijuana Addiction Statistics
- **Web address:** <http://rehab-international.org/marijuana-addiction/marijuana-addiction-statistics>

- **Summary of the statistics:**

According to another article, based on the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, Marijuana use is most common among younger individuals between the ages of 18 and 25. Marijuana tends to be a very popular drug with college students. The reason for this is probably the cost of the drug seeing as it is one of the cheapest drugs to buy. More than 30% of all college students have used this drug within the past year. Many young adults will become addicted to this substance because it is easy to obtain, cheap and provides an immediate high that can last for hours. In 1999, 222,000 individuals sought treatment for an addiction to Marijuana. By 2004, this number rose to 300,000. Those who are addicted to Marijuana will need the same drug treatment as a person addicted to any other drug. It is not easy to overcome an addiction, no matter what the substance is. Many people see Marijuana as being a safe drug, but it is addictive. Users who become addicted will need to seek treatment in order to kick the addiction and to regain a healthy lifestyle.

- **Web site #3:** Drug Statistics
- **Web address:** <http://www.drug-rehabs.org/drug-statistics-c.htm>

- **Summary of the statistics:**

According to the United Nations' estimate, 141 million people around the world use Marijuana. This number represents about 2.5 percent of the world population. Among teens 12 to 17, the average age of first trying Marijuana was 14 years old. Research has shown that people high on Marijuana show the same lack of coordination on standard "drunk driver" tests as do people who have had too much to drink. Reaction time for motor skills, such as driving is reduced by 41% after smoking 1 joint and is reduced 63% after smoking 2 joints. Among teens 12 to 17, the average age of first trying Marijuana was 14 years old. Marijuana

is a complex material containing over 400 chemicals. Marijuana is California's largest cash crop. It was found that 600,000 Canadians have a criminal record for simple possession of marijuana. 65% of people arrested for marijuana related crimes are for simple possession.

Section 4: Consumer Information

- **Web site #1 Name:** Marijuana Facts
- **Web address:** <http://www.nida.nih.gov/MarijBroch/teenpg3-4.html#long>

- **Summary of the information:**

THC in marijuana is rapidly absorbed by fatty tissues in various organs. Traces of THC can be detected by standard urine testing methods several days after a smoking session. In heavy users, however, traces can sometimes be detected for weeks after they have stopped using marijuana.

- **Web site #2 Name:**
- **Web address:** <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/drugaddiction/DS00183/DSECTION=symptoms>

- **Summary of the information:**

According to an online article, signs of use and dependence on Marijuana include: A heightened sense of visual, auditory and taste perception, poor memory, increased blood pressure and heart rate, red “blood shot” eyes, decreased coordination, difficulty concentrating, increased appetite, slowed reaction time and paranoid thinking. As the addiction become more intense hallucinations, and academic failure are possible.

- **Web site #3 Name:** Basic Facts About Drugs: Marijuana
- **Web address:** <http://www.acde.org/common/Marijana.htm>

- **Summary of the information:**

Even though Marijuana is dangerous for users of all ages, the risk is greatest for the young. The impact of using Marijuana critically affects their learning. Marijuana users who are under 18 fail to master vital interpersonal coping skills or make appropriate life-style choices, which in the long run can affect how well a person matures. Another big concern is marijuana’s role as a "gateway drug," which makes subsequent use of more potent and disabling substances more likely. The Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University found adolescents who smoke pot 85 times more likely to use cocaine than non-pot smoking peers. And 60 percent Marijuana users who smoke before they turn 15 later go on to use cocaine. Marijuana is a high-risk substance for adolescents. More than adults, they are likely to be victims of automobile accidents caused by marijuana’s impact on judgment and perception. Casual sex, prompted by compromised judgment or marijuana’s disinhibiting

effects, leaves them vulnerable not only to unwanted pregnancy but also to sexually transmitted diseases.

Section 5: Solutions to the Problem (or Issue)

- **Web site #1 Name:** Marijuana Detox
- **Web address:** <http://detox-narconon.org/marijuana-detox.html>

- **Summary of the information:**

Marijuana Detox can be a very long procedure using traditional detox methods. Marijuana withdrawal can be difficult due to the amount of marijuana toxins accumulated in the body over years of use. Marijuana has about 400 chemicals in its most natural state.

- **Web site #2 Name:** Rushford Health Care
- **Web address:** <http://www.rushford.org/>

- **Summary of the information:**

Rushford is one of Connecticut's leading substance abuse treatment providers along with mental health issues. Each year they provide inpatient and outpatient treatment services to thousands of children, adolescents, adults and families who are coping with substance abuse and mental health issues. Rushford was established in 1975. Rushford has worked with top universities such as Yale, Dartmouth and the University of Connecticut in the advancement of treatment for addiction and mental health disorders.

- **Web site #3 Name:** Marijuana Addiction
- **Web address:** http://www.marijuana-addiction.org/Stop_Smoking_Marijuana.htm

- **Summary of the information:**

Many people want to stop smoking pot, but often it is easier said than done. Some people who smoke pot can just quit "cold turkey," but others who are actually addicted to the drug may need help. Rehabilitation centers help individuals overcome their physical and psychological dependence on marijuana. There are no medications that stop Marijuana addiction. Determination and control are two necessities that are required in order to achieve a drug-free life.

Conclusions

After all of the research that was conducted for this Fact Sheet, I have learned that Marijuana is dangerous, but can be helpful when dealing with medical illness. Marijuana has dangerous short-term and long-term effects on the brain. Smoking "pot" isn't just something to do when you're bored. It shouldn't be done at all. Current users need to step back and think about what is more important, their health or a high that eventually

wears off. I never knew that Marijuana was addictive. I thought that it was a myth, and one of the sources for my research confirmed that it is indeed addictive. In middle school “D.A.R.E.” is taught by a police officer in the classroom but I think that it would be more effective if they re-introduced it again in high school in greater detail. When you’re in middle school all they tell you is that it is dangerous and that you shouldn’t do it. The instructor really doesn’t go into detail about all of the dangerous side effects. As a past user I can say that yes it was fun while it lasted but now that I am growing older my health and well-being is my main concern.

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