

NOVA Notes

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Cannabis A Risk For Psychosis?

Marijuana Increases Risk 40%

A study out of London completed by the British Health Department seems to indicate a significantly increased long term risk for psychosis for users of marijuana.

This study published in the medical journal, The Lancet in July, suggests that a review of previous studies indicates that even “use” of cannabis can increase the risk of psychotic disorders by 40 percent.

The study has reintroduced the highly controversial subject of the long term effects of marijuana use and abuse. Researcher have suspected certain linkages before and are saying that this study highlights and underlines their concerns.

Dr. Stanley Zammit, one of the study’s lead authors, and a lecturer in the Department of Psychological Medicine at Cardiff University states, “The available evidence now suggests that cannabis is not as harmless as many people think.”

The study does not prove that marijuana use

in and of itself increases the risk of psychosis (a spectrum of disorders which includes schizophrenia). There may be other factors involving cannabis users “like their tendency to use other drugs or certain personality traits, that could be causing the psychosis,” said Dr. Zammit.

The group of researchers reviewed 35 studies which followed clients for periods ranging from 1 year to 27 years. The Study also looked at other mental health concerns such as depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety, delusions, and suicidal tendencies. Cannabis is used weekly by about 20% of the young adult population so these findings suggest a broad level of concern for a drug used with this frequency.

The researchers estimate that 800 new cases of psychosis might be averted by a reduction in marijuana consumption. “Heavy users” risks are much higher. The range in the studies reviewed were from 50% to 200% greater risk of developing psychosis in later life. Dr. Wilson Compton of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) called the study “persuasive.” He indicated that, “the strongest case is that there are consistencies across all of the studies.” What is of further interest is that the link is for psychosis and not clearly identified for the other mental health issues investigated.

Scientists cannot rule out pre-existing conditions that may cause either or both the psychosis or marijuana use. The potential for cannabis to produce this outcome is known in that cannabis impacts the neurotransmitters in

In this issue...

Cannabis a Risk for Psychosis?
McBride at Kean University
NOVA Seeking Satellite Office

the brain, especially dopamine. Dopamine is suspect in a variety of mental health issues including the psychotic spectrum of disorders.

[Source: The Lancet. For more information go to www.thelancet.com, or this Journal can also be accessed on MedScape® or MedLine®. You can also feel free to contact Greg McBride, MEd, LCADC, LPC at 609-275-8855].

McBride Accepts Adjunct Faculty Position At Kean

For many years now Greg McBride, MEd, LCADC, LPC has been teaching courses, seminars, and workshops on a variety of mental health and addiction topics. He has also taught on spirituality, the Tao Te Ching, self-actualization, and living an authentic life.

For the past 4 years he has been on the faculty of the Summer School Programs at the Center of Alcohol and Drug Studies of Rutgers University. He has also taught seminars for the Center during the academic year. This year he has accepted an adjunct faculty position at Kean University for the academic year 2007-2008. His course, The Use and Abuse of Drugs is a comprehensive course covering all facets of this subject area, in addition to examining some of the current socio-political controversies in the United States.

Some of these issues include: "Should we legalize or decriminalize the drugs of abuse?," "Is marijuana safe and does it have valid medical uses?," "What is it about the college culture that promotes students' drinking behavior?," "Is the war on drugs effective?," "Why isn't drug treatment a priority for healthcare providers?," "How does the current 'healthcare crisis' impact treatment options?," "Does treatment really work?," "Can addicts and alcoholics get better?,"

"Is addiction a disease?," and "Does prevention keep kids from using and abusing alcohol and drugs?." Of course these are but a sampling of what is in store for the students of Kean University.

[If you would like more information about Kean University you can find them on the web at www.kean.edu.]

NOVA Seeking Satellite Office

We are currently looking to open a satellite office in the Northern Somerset County area.

For a number of years now we have been attracting clients from a variety of areas from Central and South Jersey. After quite a bit of thought and consideration we have decided to open an office in the Hillsborough-Somerville-Bridgewater area.

By opening this facility we believe it will help people driving the distance from that area to the Princeton area (which is quite a trek and rather time consuming). Commuting Route 206 and then trying to cross Princeton can make for a fairly arduous journey. By having an office up North we can give those up there the same convenience we offer to those here in the South.

If you or someone you know has any space available, or knows of offices for lease, please call Greg at (609) 275-8855 or Cliff at (609) 252-1152.

NOVA Associates
231 Clarksville Rd., Suite 7A
Princeton Junction, NJ 08550-5300
(609) 275-8855 McBride
(609) 275-9655 Our Fax