

NOVA Notes

Volume 4, Issue 3

Spring 2010

NJ 14th State for Medical Marijuana

Medicinal Marijuana?

The idea of Cannabis having medicinal properties goes back historically thousands of years. In fact there was a time in the early 1900s that Cannabis was entirely legal for medical and/or recreational purposes. So what's all the fuss about?

Well first, cannabis is still classified as a Schedule 1 drug by the Federal Government. This classification is reserved for drugs having no medicinal purpose and a strong likelihood of being abused.

Second, the marijuana being smoked today is much more potent than previous generations. Isn't it? It has also become clearer that cannabis does produce physical dependence and a withdrawal syndrome in heavy users.

Third, isn't it confusing to tell young people who have been told for years that marijuana was "bad" that now maybe it's

OK? That some individuals use it to treat HIV/AIDS patients to increase appetite, cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy to reduce nausea, and glaucoma patients to reduce the risk of blindness? And what about those with MS or chronic pain? The list goes on.

Well it does seem to be a controversial issue and the contention over it has not subsided since the passing of the statute. The state of California has now had 10 years of experience with medicinal marijuana which has treated thousands of patients and created a multi-billion dollar business (and at least by state law legitimate).

In the era of Prohibition cannabis replaced alcohol as the only legal intoxicant available. Some historians believe that marijuana got lumped in with concerns about heroin and cocaine due primarily to political concerns from the southwestern states. NYC commissioned a 4 year study of cannabis in the late 1930s which found little issue with the drug. Unfortunately the medical researchers found themselves embroiled in the political climate of the time and further study of cannabis was delayed for decades. One of the highlights of the

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study was that there had been no overdose concern with cannabis unlike drugs such as heroin and cocaine.

Today's research has only clouded the issue by producing seemingly contradictory outcomes. For each study citing positive benefits there is another suggesting the negative effects. The one thing both proponents of the statute and opponents of the statute have agreed upon is the need for continuing rigorous scientific study. With more states considering medicinal marijuana laws it is imperative we have the best scientific evidence possible. Stay tuned!

A Friend And Tireless Volunteer In The Drug And Alcohol Field Has Died

For those of us who knew Bill his passing has left us with the heaviest of hearts. There was never a time when he wouldn't go out of his way to help those suffering addictions, including opening up his own home if it would assist in the healing process. He was that rare sort of fellow who could talk to anyone, put them at ease, and leave them with a sense that everything was going to work out for the best.

Yes William Blake, MD departed this world for the next on February 11, 2010. He had been ill for sometime and so his passing was not unexpected. None the less he will be greatly missed by all of us. He was always generous with his time, always greeted you with a smile, and on most occasions, had a joke or two for his friends.

He was a humble man who spoke about "letting go..." and "turning it over..." To think of all the lives he touched and helped change both as a medical professional and a tireless volunteer is simply mind boggling. He never failed to bring the best of his experience, strength, and hope to those who needed it most. Something he did routinely for the past 45 years. May God guide and keep you, and many thanks for all you've done.

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