

CANNABINOID CHRONICLES



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Medical Cannabis News and Information

US – Thirteen San Diego Cannabis Dispensaries Raided

Medical cannabis patients, advocates and activists in San Diego County are furious about raids on 13 medical cannabis dispensaries that took place on Dec 12, 2005. The aggressive raids came on the heels of the county Board of Supervisors' decision to sue the state in federal court to overturn the law that allows sick people to use cannabis as medicine.

The Drug Enforcement Administration led a multi-agency assault on the dispensaries, handcuffing whomever was inside the shops and confiscating products, computers and patient records.

Activist Dion Markgraaff, coordinator for the San Diego chapter of Americans for Safe Access, an organization that advocates on behalf of medical cannabis patients said "I regard [the raids] as a political tactic used often by the US government: low-intensity warfare."

One shop, Utopia, serves 2,000 to 3,000 patients, including 150 who are terminally ill. "They're scared," the operator Tony Amarine said. "They're not going to get medicine. They're gonna go back to the streets, or they're going to go without." Amarine vowed to open again the next day and then sue the federal government.

"Anne," a 45-year-old patient who declined to give her real name, said she favours cannabis over prescription drugs for the fibromyalgia she suffers from. If she can't get cannabis at a dispensary, Anne said, "I'll exhaust my existing resources [and then] I'll buy it back on the streets. That's what Proposition 215 was trying to eliminate."

However, the police stated that Prop. 215's intent lay at the heart of the San Diego Police Department's decision to take part in the raids. The warrants followed investigations by undercover agents who purchased cannabis without the paperwork required for medical use. Assistant Police Chief Cheryl Meyers said Dec 13 that "we were convinced; the evidence was there" that each of the 13 locations raided were acting outside the boundaries of Prop. 215 and the city's medical-marijuana guidelines. She said state and city laws do not allow for caregivers, which is what the dispensaries are supposed to be, to make a profit. She added that in most cases, the dispensaries had more pot on hand than city law allows. Proposition 215 guidelines allow caregivers to have 2 lbs (0.4 kg)

of cannabis and 48 plants.

One example mentioned as undesirable was a person who wanted to sell cannabis to a dispensary at a profit. Yet clubs without a constant supply of their own - and 2 lbs and 48 plants may not cut it for large clubs - are still at the whim of the black market because there is no legal supply. Another concern was a dispensary where a firearm was found. Quite possibly not the smartest move in a healing environment, but, again, prohibition creates strange bedfellows. Surprise, surprise.

Reminder to police and government: when a substance is prohibited, unscrupulous and non-altruistic people will make tax-free profits, sometimes enormous, and sometimes violently.

Time for a new, more flexible approach? Maybe it's time to seriously act upon patient need.

Source: San Diego City Beat, Dec 14, 2005.
www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v05.n1953.a06.html

Canada - Legal Medical Cannabis Grower Unable to Get Insurance

Tim Selenski, a licensed medical cannabis grower under the Health Canada program, is moving away from Saskatchewan, saying he is tired of dealing with companies that won't insure his operation. Selenski was growing his first crop for a Regina man licensed to possess cannabis for medical purposes. Because of the nature of the product, Selenski said he has taken numerous security measures to protect the operation, including cameras, alarms, guard dogs and a tall chain link fence.

"I'm a small jail here," he said. Even so, when he tried to have the equipment needed for the grow operation insured for about \$3,000, he was told by his primary insurer to dismantle the operation within 30 days or risk losing his insurance on his shop and home as well, he said.

"And that's on my house, store, everything," said Selenski. "There's \$120,000 worth of equity in my life that I've built up. Just to throw away for 10 plants, it wasn't worth it."

After being refused by Saskatchewan Mutual Insurance Co, Selenski said he took his request to 11 other companies, all of which similarly refused to insure the grow operation. One of those companies was Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI), he said.

SGI spokesperson Barbara Cross said in general the corporation doesn't cover marijuana grow operations at this time, even if it is a licensed operation, because it is considered too **high-risk**, (emphasis added; perhaps we should remove cannabis prohibition and reevaluate the risks, and/or read "Sell Marijuana Legally")

Source: The StarPhoenix, Dec 8, 2005.
www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v05/n1934/a03.html



VICS Now Open 7 Days a Week

Starting Jan. 8, 2006, the VICS will be open every day of the week to meet our member's needs.

New Hours: Mon. to Fri. 11 to 5; Sat. & Sun. 11 to 4

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IACM Bulletin: www.cannabis-med.org

Science: Cream with endocannabinoids effective in the treatment of pruritus due to kidney disease

Researchers of the University of Wrocław, Poland, investigated the effects of an ointment with structured physiological lipids and endocannabinoids in 21 patients with pruritus due to end-stage failure of kidney function. So-called uremic pruritus is still a common symptom in patients with end-stage renal failure. However, there is no effective treatment for this condition. All patients applied the tested cream twice daily for a period of three weeks. Global pruritus and dry skin were examined before the trial, on study visits at weekly intervals, and two weeks after completion of the study.

After 3-week therapy pruritus was completely eliminated in 8 patients. Dry skin was significantly improved. Researchers noted that "it is very probable that the observed decrease of pruritus with the test product therapy was not only the result of dry skin improvement but that the addition of endocannabinoids may have also played a role." (* try the VICS olive oil/beeswax salve *)

Source: Szepietowski JC, Szepietowski T, Reich A. Efficacy and tolerance of the cream containing structured physiological lipids with endocannabinoids in the treatment of uremic pruritus: a preliminary study. *Acta Dermatovenerol Croat* 2005;13(2):97-103.

Czech Republic: Legalization of medical use

The government plans to make cannabis-based medicines available for medical use. So far, the substances from cannabis, mainly its major active substance THC, can be applied in research only on the basis of a permit issued by the Health Ministry. Theoretically, they can be used in a special medical treatment in selected cases, but the ministry said that no one has been treated with cannabis extracts in the Czech Republic yet. "With regard to the worldwide rising interest in a possible medical use of hemp, we consider it beneficial to list cannabis among the narcotics that can be used for therapeutic purposes," Vaclav Sebor from the Health Ministry's press section told the newspaper Lidove noviny.

Source: Prague Daily Monitor Dec 12 2005

Science: Cannabis use by adolescents

Researchers of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York said on Nov 30 2005 that heavy use of cannabis by adolescents may damage a key brain pathway associated with language development. Brain scans revealed microscopic abnormalities in a region of the brain that governs higher aspects of

language and listening functions in adolescents who are heavy marijuana smokers. Similar damage was found in the brains of cannabis smokers and schizophrenics studied. "These findings suggest that in addition to interfering with normal brain development, heavy marijuana use in adolescents may also lead to an earlier onset of schizophrenia in individuals who are genetically predisposed to the disorder," said psychiatry professor Sanjiv Kumra.

Source: Reuters of 30 November 2005

Science: Depression

Blockade of the deactivation of the endocannabinoid anandamide resulted in antidepressant-like effects in a mouse and a rat model of depression. Researchers used an inhibitor of the enzyme fatty-acid amide hydrolase, which increases the breakdown of anandamide, thus increasing the concentration of this endocannabinoid. They concluded that these "findings support a role for anandamide in mood regulation and point to fatty-acid amide hydrolase as a previously uncharacterized target for antidepressant drugs."

Source: Gobbi G, et al. *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A* 2005;102(51):18620-5

Science: Cancer

A synthetic analogue of anandamide, called Met-F-anandamide, was effective in reducing invasion into the surrounding tissues and metastatic spreading of breast cancer in animal tests. These effects were mediated by CB1 receptors. Researchers propose that the activation of CB1 receptors "might represent a novel therapeutic strategy to slow down the growth of breast carcinoma and to inhibit its metastatic diffusion."

Source: Grimaldi C, et al. *Exp Cell Res* 2006;312(4):363-73

Science: Cancer

In this study cells of a certain blood cell cancer, called mantle cell lymphoma, with increased concentrations of CB1 and CB2 receptors responded to a treatment with the synthetic cannabinoid Win-55,212-2. This cannabinoid that acts similar to THC resulted in a decreased viability of these cancer cells in cell studies. Cancer cells of the same type that lacked cannabinoid receptors did not respond to this treatment.

Source: Flygare J, et al. *FEBS Lett* 2005;579(30):6885-9

Science: Alzheimer's disease

Researchers investigated the effects of a synthetic cannabinoid that binds specifically to the CB2 receptor on certain immune cells of the brain called microglial cells. These cells are involved in a number of neurodegenerative disorders, including Alzheimer's disease and multiple sclerosis. The cannabinoid reduced several effects induced by microglial cells that usually result in nerve cell damage.

Source: Ehrhart J, et al. *J Neuroinflammation* 2005;2(1):29

Science: Brain injury

In a phase III clinical trial the synthetic cannabinoid dexamabinol was not effective in reducing the consequences of severe traumatic brain injury. 861 patients admitted to 86 specialist centres from 15 countries were included in this placebo-controlled study. Patients were randomised to receive a single intravenous 150 mg dose of dexamabinol or placebo within 6 h of injury. Outcome between the two groups did not differ 6 months after the injury.

Source: Maas AI, et al. *Lancet Neurol* 2006;5(1):38-45

Compassion Club Kit

A recent magazine article mentioned that the VICS has copies of the paperwork used in day-today operations available for those wishing to start their own compassion club.

This paperwork is now available online; visit www.thevics.com and look under "VICS Documents". (the rest is up to you)

Find us online at <http://www.thevics.com>



Maastricht's Controversial Trip:

Holland's well-known liberal drug policy is about to be challenged. The border town of Maastricht in southern Holland, within short driving distance from Belgium, Germany and France, plans to make it technically illegal to serve foreigners in the city's 16 coffee shops, a move that could drive many of them out of business. If the policy is upheld in the courts, it could, eventually, be extended nationwide.

The idea is just one of three controversial schemes in Maastricht designed to curb the social problems produced by Holland's unique drug laws. Maastricht supports the controlled sale of a limited amount of cannabis to an individual but it believes it needs to implement contradictory laws to counter what it calls unwelcome consequences due to high tourist traffic.

Proximity to countries with more restrictive laws has resulted in huge popularity with Maastricht's coffee shops, many of which are in the historic centre. Maastricht residents seem not to like the number of tourists, their behaviour nor the accompanying culture (i.e. unscrupulous and/or violent) that feeds off a technically prohibited substance.

The whole point of coffee shops was to bring the use of soft drugs out of the sphere of influence of the criminal gangs, but it appears not to have gone far enough. Though several nations have relaxed their laws on soft drugs, the Netherlands leads the way in regulating their sale. Coffee shops are licensed and no alcohol can be sold or consumed in them. According to the government's own guide, the policy is a success.

But this has been achieved through a contradictory law. Technically all drugs are illegal in the Netherlands though coffee shops are permitted to sell a maximum of five grams of cannabis without facing prosecution. While it is an offence to produce, possess, sell, import or export hard drugs or cannabis, it is not illegal to use drugs. That means it is legal for a customer to buy five grams of cannabis in a coffee shop, but it is illegal for the shop to acquire the stock to sell. Therefore, everybody except the light cannabis user is still open to prosecution.

Of course, to supply the estimated 1.2 million tourists per year in Maastricht with cannabis has led to a massive local cannabis-growing industry. And along with prohibition comes all the other drugs and associated problems, and a growing police force.

The city is, however, adopting two different policies in addition to the resident-only rule. The Mayor is leading a push to shift some of the coffee shops out of the city centre. Mr. Leers wants to create three drive-in centres on main roads away from the heart of Maastricht and from residential areas to service the demand from drug tourists. This project directly contradicts the policy of barring foreigners from coffee shops because it is designed to serve that non-Dutch demand but keep it away from the city centre.

Nevertheless, the authorities know their residents-only policy on cannabis will not be enforced for at least two years because of the time the legal test case will take.

Finally, and most controversially, the city would like to see a liberal measure adopted to regulate the so-called "back door" coffee shop trade. Maastricht has offered to host an experiment in cultivating cannabis under strict supervision to supply local coffee shops and put criminal gangs out of business. Though the logic of their policies suggests that the Netherlands should allow legal production of cannabis, ministers have always shrunk from such a step, knowing it would provoke an international storm.

For the coffee shop-owners the city's policies present an unprecedented challenge. Marc Josemans, who runs the Easy Going coffee shop, accepts that there are difficulties in the city, but says that "the only people who bring problems are the criminals who are being attracted by the stream of cannabis clients on our streets." Mr Josemans, president of the society of official coffee shops in Maastricht, is a fierce opponent of the city's efforts to bar foreigners and has agreed to be prosecuted so he can contest the case.

Prohibition has pushed the good cultivators out and opened the door to organized crime. But while local government and the coffee shops agree that it is at the root of their problems, power to permit such an experiment rests in The Hague. Maastricht's plan to legalise the "backdoor" looks likely to be blocked by national government. And that will leave the city trying to manage the consequences of a flawed drug law with two, contradictory, policies. It will start creating coffee shops for foreigners outside the city centre, while putting in place a law that could ban them from buying.

Source: Independent (UK), Dec 26, 2005.
www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v05/n2003/a11.html

Economics and Illegal Drugs

The United Nations believes that the annual global sales of illegal drugs are between \$450 and \$750 billion. In Canada, estimates range from \$7 to \$18 billion. Federally, 11 departments and agencies spend about \$500 million annually to address illicit drug use in Canada. About 95% of the federal government's expenditures that address illicit drugs were used for supply reduction (enforcement or interdiction). As a taxpayer, how do you feel about this?

Source: Illicit Drugs: The Federal Government's Role. Office of the Auditor General of Canada (2001)



Definitions:

crass *a.* thick, gross; figuratively gross (*crass stupidity*); grossly stupid; hence *crassitude n.*, *crassly adv.*, *crassness n.* [from Latin *crassus solid*, thick]
(The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 7th ed., 1983)

inclusive *v.t.* including, comprising, (*of*, or absolutely); (*as adv.*) with inclusion of the extreme limits stated (*pages 7 to 26 inclusive*); including much or all (*inclusive terms* at hotel etc.); hence *inclusively adv.*, *inclusiveness n.* [from medieval Latin *inclusivus*]
(*ibid.*)

obfuscate *v.t.* darken, obscure, confuse, (mind, judgement, topic, etc.); stupefy, bewilder; hence *obfuscation n.*, *obfuscatory a.* [from Late Latin OB(*fuscare* from *fuscus* dark) + *-ate*]
(*ibid.*)

peccadillo *n.* (*plural peccadilloes or peccadillos*) trifling offence, venial sin. [from Spanish *peccadillo*, diminutive of *pecado* sin, from Latin].
(*ibid.*)

Got questions about growing? Our resident guru Mat has made available an e-mail address where you can direct queries -

askmatb@hotmail.com

UK - Cannabis Re-classification Opposed

Ministers face a dilemma over the legal status of cannabis after a government review avoided the question of whether it should be reclassified and targeted with renewed priority by police. The government had asked the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs to review the possible links between cannabis and mental illness. The advisory council, which has reassessed the Government's decision of two years ago to downgrade cannabis, has backed away from recommending that cannabis be reclassified from a class C drug back to a class B drug. The Home Secretary will reflect on the report and announce a decision in 2006.

The end of the review comes as an inquest opens into the death of a woman who had been taking part in trials of an experimental whole plant cannabis-based drug. Rene Anderson, 70, was given Sativex to ease symptoms of diabetic neuropathy, a generalised nerve pain in her hands and feet. Richard Starkie, her family's solicitor, said yesterday.

Mr. Starkie said that Mrs. Anderson developed psychosis shortly after taking the drug, but GW Pharmaceuticals, the makers of Sativex, insist that the drug has been "well-tolerated" by patients in extensive trials, and that they were "surprised and disappointed" that Mr. Starkie had pre-empted the coroner's findings.

Mrs. Anderson was admitted to the Royal Hallamshire Hospital in Sheffield on March 3 2004, and died ten weeks later after developing pneumonia and kidney failure.

In Nov. 2005 it was announced that Sativex, a mouth spray for the relief of spasticity in multiple sclerosis patients, was to be made available in Britain under a special Home Office licence. Ministers granted manufacturers GW Pharmaceuticals permission to import the product into the UK from Canada. The drug has not yet been granted a marketing authorisation by



the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). Doctors can currently prescribe it only on a named-patient basis.

Senior Home Office officials believe that public debate on drugs has become "trapped" on the question of legalisation and would welcome clarity on the status of cannabis, but police chiefs have urged keeping the law as it is and said that, if cannabis is reclassified as a class B drug, its possession should be enforced with a fixed penalty notice in order not to divert police officers' time. As reported in this newsletter Feb 2005, an estimated 199,000 police hours were saved in the first year of reclassification, according to data from 26 Of the 42 English and Welsh police forces.

Source: The Times (UK), Mon, Dec 12 2005,
www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v05/n1945/a08.html

VICS First Annual Winter Coat Drive A Success

The Vancouver Island Compassion Society is happy to announce that the first annual winter coat drive exceeded our expectations, with still more coming in. The society dropped off the first load to the Open Door ministry in late December.

"We always seem to be reactive rather than proactive when it comes to cold weather... so we decided in November to start collecting for this winter drive," said Philippe Lucas, director.

At the same time, Lucas said the donation of winter clothing will only go so far given the size of Victoria's homeless population. "This is a small drop in the bucket for the greater need of the disadvantaged here in Victoria. It's our small contribution," he said.

Source: Victoria News Dec 23, 2005,
www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v05/n1995/a02.html

FEDERAL ELECTION JAN. 23RD

Like it or not, an election is one way we can affect change, simply by voting. Challenge those folks who we pay to run our country – exercise your right to vote.



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<http://www.safeaccess.ca>

Canadian CannabisCoalition

www.cannabiscoalition.ca

Canada Medical Marihuana

www.medicalmarihuana.ca

Media Awareness Project

<http://www.mapinc.org>

Action Committee of People with Disabilities

383-4105

Health Canada

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/marihuana/index_e.html

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Norml Canada

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Cannabis Health

<http://www.cannabishealth.com>

Cannabis Research Institute

<http://www.cannabisresearchinstituteinc.com>

“...and what is flirtatiousness but an argument that life must go on and on and on?”

– Kurt Vonnegut, from “Jailbird (1979)”