

CANNABINOID CHRONICLES



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Medical Cannabis News and Information

US - New Mexico Latest State For Medical Cannabis

The 12th US state approved the use of medical cannabis last month when New Mexico, in a reversal, voted to approve a measure to legalize cannabis for medical purposes.

By a narrow margin, the House passed a bill that will allow patients to seek approval from the state to use cannabis to alleviate the symptoms of several debilitating medical conditions approved by the state Department of Health. This would include cancer, glaucoma, multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injuries, epilepsy and AIDS.

New Mexico's bill is now sent to Governor Bill Richardson who already said that he will approve the measure. Indeed, he was a force behind the bill.

Under the legislation, the Department of Health would be required to create a system for distributing medical cannabis to patients by October 1, 2007. They would issue identification cards to patients and caregivers, and also license producers to grow cannabis.

"This bill will provide much-needed relief for New Mexicans suffering from debilitating diseases while including the proper safeguards to prevent abuse," Governor Richardson said in a written statement.

Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Maine, Nevada, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington have already legalized the medical use of cannabis.

Source: New Mexican of Mar 14 2007, Associated Press of Mar 15, www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v07/n319/a04.html

US - Contradictory California

Talk about contradictory messages. The debate in California as to whether medical cannabis users should be given the green light or sent to prison rages on over ten years after voters passed Proposition 215.

The federal government is rigidly anti-cannabis, no matter what evidence or need is presented, and they are still trumping California law by arresting, prosecuting and seizing cannabis for medical purposes.

On March 13, a federal appeals court in San Francisco ruled that Angel Raich, a California woman with an inoperable brain tumour, may not use cannabis to ease her pain even though a Californian law permits it (!).

The judges expressed sympathy for some arguments by plaintiff Raich but didn't act. The court's decision said use of the drug for

medical purposes was gaining support but federal law banned it. "We agree with Raich that medical and conventional wisdom that recognizes the use of marijuana for medical purposes is gaining traction in the law as well," the decision said. "For now, federal law is blind to the wisdom of a future day when the right to use medical marijuana to alleviate excruciating pain may be deemed fundamental. (Can you say heartless lawmakers?)"

Just down the road, on the same day, a federal judge gave the nod to medical cannabis supporters, tossing out most of the US charges against cannabis activist and writer Ed Rosenthal, saying a five-year campaign to put him behind bars gave "the appearance of vindictiveness."

Rosenthal has been a high-profile cannabis advocate since the 1970s, the author of a syndicated column, which gives how-to advice on growing cannabis as well as a several photo books devoted to the cannabis plant.

Rosenthal was convicted of cannabis cultivation growing in 2003 but was sentenced to only one day in jail. An appeals court overturned the conviction.

Rather than giving up, federal prosecutors piled on more charges, including four counts of money laundering and five counts of filing false tax returns. US District Court Judge Charles Breyer tossed those charges, leaving only the previous cannabis charges. If the gov-

ernment proceeds to trial, it cannot seek jail time beyond the one day Rosenthal has already served.

And neither medical cannabis nor efforts to stop it appear to be going away. Federal seizures of California cannabis have risen steadily, up 340% between 2001 and 2006. Arrests are up 65% in the same period.

Yet the number of medical cannabis dispensaries authorized by Proposition 215, a 1996 state referendum, has tripled.

"The priorities of the federal government are a bit misplaced in putting large amounts of resources into going after people for this," said San Francisco District Attorney Kamala Harris.

"The vast majority of Californians and certainly San Franciscans believe that marijuana has medicinal purposes."

And while the war and the heartless rhetoric continue, patients seeking relief are forced to sit on the sidelines or, worse, sit in jail. It causes one to wonder what our priorities really are.

Source: Reuters Mar 14, and San Francisco Chronicle Mar 22 2007, <http://www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v07/n360/a04.html>



Science: Parkinson's disease

According to research by scientists of Stanford University, California, with animal models of Parkinson's disease the combined administration of a dopamine-2 receptor agonist and substance, which increases endocannabinoid concentrations, effectively reduce motor deficits of the disease. Researchers conclude that their findings "suggest approaches for the development of therapeutic drugs for the treatment" of Parkinson's and similar diseases.

Source: Kreitzer AC, Malenka RC. *Nature* 2007;445(7128):643-7.

Science: Anxiety and depression

In an Australian study the use of cannabis before the age of 15 was associated with a higher risk to experience anxiety and depression in early adulthood. Researchers had followed 3239 subjects from birth to the age of 21.

Source: Hayatbakhsh MR, et al. *J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry* 2007;46(3):408-417.

Science: Smell

In animal research scientists of the University of Göttingen, Germany, found out that cells that are responsible for the perception of odours in the nose are influenced by cannabinoids. Blocking of CB1 receptors by cannabinoid receptor antagonists reduced the sensitivity to odours, while the treatment with cannabinoids increased sensitivity. Lead researcher Dr. Dirk Czesnik said in a newspaper article that this makes sense. In case of hunger endocannabinoid levels are increased in the brain and hungry people do perceive odours more strongly. "The more cannabis acts, the stronger is the sensitivity to odours."

Source: *Die Welt* of 26 February 2007; Czesnik D, et al. *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A*. 2007 Feb 14

Science: Dronabinol as effective as ondansetron in the treatment of delayed nausea and vomiting after chemotherapy

In a clinical study at the Bethesda Memorial Hospital in Boynton Beach, USA, dronabinol was as effective as ondansetron in 61 patients chemotherapy in reducing delayed nausea and vomiting. A combination of both medications was no more effective than both of the single drugs.

Patients received dexamethasone (20 mg oral) and ondansetron (16 mg intravenous) on day 1. They also received either placebo or dronabinol (2.5 mg oral) before and after chemotherapy. On day 2, fixed doses of placebo, dronabinol (10 mg), ondansetron (16 mg), or combination therapy were administered. On days 3-5, patients received placebo, flexible doses of dronabinol (10-20 mg), ondansetron (8-16 mg), or dronabinol and ondansetron.

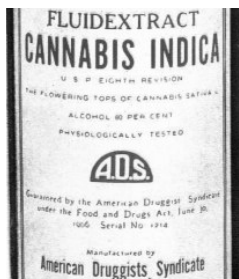
Total response to therapy was defined as nausea intensity below 5 on a visual analog scale, no vomiting or retching and no need for additional antiemetic medication. 64 patients participated and 61 were analyzed. Total response was similar with dronabinol (54%), ondansetron (58%), and combination therapy (47%) versus placebo (20%). Nausea absence was significantly greater in active treatment groups (dronabinol, 71%; ondansetron, 64%; combination therapy, 53%) versus placebo (15%). Nausea intensity and vomiting or retching were lowest in patients treated with dronabinol. All active treatments were well tolerated.

Source: Meiri E, et al Efficacy of dronabinol alone and in combination with ondansetron versus ondansetron alone for delayed chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting. *Curr Med Res Opin* 2007;23(3):533-3.

Science: Pain

In animal experiments it was shown that blockade of a certain protein (cyclooxygenase), for example by indomethacin, increased the pain-reducing effects of a synthetic cannabinoid (WIN55,212-2). Indomethacin is a widely-used anti-inflammatory drug.

Source: Ahn DK, et al. *Pain*. 2007 Feb 22



Days after the federal government unveiled a budget that earmarked \$64 million for a Canadian anti-drug strategy, a new report says the social and economic costs associated with alcohol are twice as high as those racked up by illegal drug use.

The study says Canadians have an exaggerated view of the harms associated with illegal drugs, possibly fueled by vivid media reports, and the emphasis given the subject by police organizations, political leaders and policy-makers.

The study, released March 28 by the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, suggests anti-drug strategies should include alcohol as a significant part of the equation.

The study said the economic and social costs of alcohol abuse reached \$7.4 billion in 2002, more than twice the \$3.6 billion associated with illicit drug use. But Canadians' perceptions of the two problems were out of whack with those figures, the study found.

It said that while only 25% of Canadians identified alcohol abuse as a "very serious" national problem, 45% felt illicit drug use was "very serious."

Source: Province, The, Mar 29 2007, www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v07/n407/a14.html

Kreiger Gets Jail, To Include Medical Cannabis

A judge says he had no choice but to send medicinal cannabis crusader Grant Krieger to jail for drug trafficking, but he wants assurances corrections authorities will uphold Krieger's constitutional exemption to have the drug behind bars to alleviate pain for his multiple sclerosis.

Provincial court Judge William Pepler, in an unprecedented ruling, postponed Krieger's four-month incarceration until June 18 or until he receives an answer from corrections officials that they will make provisions to honour another judge's order of seven years ago to allow him access to cannabis.

"We'll come back and speak to it on June 18, only if the authorities have not made a provision for Mr. Krieger to receive marijuana in custody," said Pepler.

Pepler convicted Krieger on two counts of drug trafficking after police seized two packages containing 801 grams of marijuana sent through his Grant Krieger Compassion Club to people in Manitoba for distribution to people with similar afflictions.

Source: Calgary Herald, Mar 28 2007
<http://www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v07/n404/a02.html>

Who wrote Rollin' and Tumblin' ? Not Dylan. It was none other than one of the fathers of Chicago Blues, McKinley Morganfield, aka Muddy Waters (1915 - 1983).

The BC Compassion Club Society and the Vancouver Island Compassion Society proudly present

No More Drug War

Double Bill FilmFest

Last call for the 'No More Drug War' film festival to be held in Victoria on April 14th (Roxy Theatre) and again in Vancouver (VanCity Theatre) on April 15th.

"**Waiting To Inhale**" and "**Damage Done**" will showcase people in the fight for their lives, or for their friends and families lives, as they encounter a system resistant to medical cannabis and a population held hostage by the drug war. Directors of both films will be available for discussion plus special guests. Admission is \$5 for BCCCS and VICS members, and \$10 (suggested donation) for general public. Showtime is 12:30pm in both cities.

Hope to see you there!

Proposed Drug Harm Rating System

In a study released March 23, medical experts in the UK say the current Class A, B and C drug rating system - in place for 36 years - should be scrapped and a new system introduced.

Based upon a new scale which rates substances according to the harm they cause, alcohol and tobacco, for example, are more harmful than class A drugs such as LSD and ecstasy. The research team asked experts from many fields, including psychiatry, neuroscience and law, to rate a list of 20 legal and illegal drugs.

The substances were ranked on three factors - physical harm to the individual, addictive qualities and their damaging effects on families, communities and society.

The new list was drawn up by Professor David Nutt, of the University of Bristol, and Professor Colin Blakemore, chief executive of the Medical Research Council.

Prof Nutt said "We believe a system like ours, based on the scoring of harms by experts, on the basis of scientific evidence, has much to commend it."

Prof Blakemore added: "At present there is no rational, evidence-based method for assessing the harm of drugs. We have tried to develop such a method."

But Home Office Minister Vernon Coaker said: "We have no intention of reviewing the drug classification system."

"Our priority is harm reduction and to achieve this we focus on enforcement, education and treatment."

(Huh? Isn't harm reduction supposed to be the *fourth* pillar?)

Anyway, here's the list:

The 20 Most Dangerous Drugs Named by Experts Defined by the Harm They Do

1. Heroin
2. Cocaine
3. Barbiturates (prescription sedatives)
4. Street methadone
5. Alcohol
6. Ketamine
7. Benzodiazepines (prescription tranquillizers)
8. Amphetamine
9. Tobacco
10. Buprenorphine (used to treat opiate addiction)
11. Cannabis
12. Solvents
13. 4-MTA (amphetamine derivative; sold as ecstasy or "flatliners")
14. LSD
15. Methylphenidate (used to treat ADHD)
16. Anabolic steroids
17. GHB (used by bodybuilders; associated with date rape cases)
18. Ecstasy
19. Alkyl nitrites (stimulant called amyl nitrates or "poppers")
20. Khat (plant that gives off a high when chewed)

Source: Daily Record, 23 Mar 2007, www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v07/n370/a03.html
Referenced: The Lancet report <http://www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v07/n366/a01.html>
Development Of A Rational Scale To Assess The Harm Of Drugs Of Potential Misuse
Nutt D, King LA, Saulsbury W, Blakemore C. The Lancet - Vol. 369, Issue 9566, 24 March 2007, Pages 1047-1053

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

Trial Going Ahead in May 2007

The trial involving two individuals and the production of cannabis for VICS members is finally going to occur next month, nearly three years to the day of the bust. Court begins on Wed. morning, May 9, at the downtown Victoria courthouse.

Please come out and show your support for those who have put their lives on the line for VICS members.

A Note From the VICS Student Nurse

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of VICS for welcoming me during the past 3 months. I have learned from and enjoyed listening to each of your experiences. As some members are aware, I have become interested in the effectiveness and side effects of prescription medications and medical cannabis use. I found there to be little research that has been conducted thus far therefore, I decided to create my own *Preliminary Investigation into the Effectiveness and Side Effects of Prescription Medications and Medical Cannabis Use*.

The survey's findings helped me understand the individual experiences members have with medical cannabis use and some of their personal concerns. I was able to conclude from the members who completed the survey that prescription medications often had more side effects, were associated with higher costs, and were not quite as effective in treating their symptoms (7 on a scale of 0-10). Whereas medical cannabis was identified as being able to better relieve symptoms (8.5 on a scale of 0-10), however, for 52.9% of the members it related to cough/chest congestion.

Perhaps the most interesting part of the survey was found in the last part when members commented on pharmaceuticals or medical cannabis. A frequent remark was the need for more research into the effects of cannabis use. I agree and hope that more unbiased research will take place so that society can better understand the therapeutic potential and adverse effects of medical cannabis use.

In closing, I would like to say that my eyes have really been opened during my time spent at VICS because I have been able to recognize the inappropriate judgmental stigmas that are placed on medical cannabis users. As one of your fellow members wrote in the survey, "Cannabis is a medicine if used as one".

Sincerely, Kristen
3rd year UVIC nursing student

Neuroprotection

In animal studies it was shown that tolerance developed to the neuroprotective effects of THC against brain damage, but no tolerance developed to the neuroprotective effects of cannabidiol (CBD).

Source: Hayakawa K, et al. Neuropharmacology. 2007 Feb 20

DEFINITIONS

ardour *n.* fierce heat; warm emotion; fervour, zeal, (*for*). [Middle English from Old French, from Latin *ardor -oris* (*ardere* burn)] (The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 7th ed., 1983)

derange *v.t.* throw into confusion, put out of order, disorganize, cause to act irregularly; (especially in past participle) make insane, disturb, interrupt; so derangement. [from French *deranger* (*as DE-, rang RANK*)] (*ibid.*)

sophism *n.* false argument, especially one intended to deceive (compare PARALOGISM). [Middle English, from Old French *sophime* from Latin from Greek *sophisma* clever device (*sophi-zomai* become wise from *sophos* wise)] (*ibid.*)

Bylaw Leaves Abbotsford Homeowner In Cold

A bylaw intended to help uncover indoor cannabis grow operations in Abbotsford, BC, has put a homeowner on the street and is forcing him to proclaim his innocence.

On March 7, Mike Morino was barred from living in his home and the water and power were cut off, after bylaw inspectors found defects that contravened the city's Controlled Substance Property bylaw. He has a city invoice for \$6,500 for inspection and disconnection fees, on top of whatever it will cost him to fix the defects.

City workers told him heat sensor testing suggested a grow-op was in the house, but he said they wouldn't say when the test was done, or what other evidence the bylaw enforcers have on him, and when it was recorded.

Electrical defects were discovered during the latest inspection, but they are the same complaints as listed by the city inspectors on a 2002 house inspection report that Morino got from the previous home owner. Defects they found included a *missing door on the electrical panel, an exposed wire, a broken electrical outlet, and some black mould in the wood near a leaking basement bathroom.* (emphasis added - are these findings really that extraordinary?)

"They've made up their minds and there's nothing I can do. I should have more rights than this. They should be proving that I'm guilty, not me having to prove I'm innocent."

There may have been something shady in the past, Morino said, but insists there was no grow-op when he bought the house in July 2006 and there hasn't been one in there since.

Lawyer John Conroy said he's heard several complaints from other homeowners caught in the dragnet of this bylaw. He suspects the bylaw would not hold up in a court challenge. Criminal law oversees matters such as cannabis grows, but local governments, using bylaws, have pushed the illegal substance issue into their arena by saying it deals with property matters and community safety.

On March 26, Morino appeared before city council to express his frustration at not being allowed to live in his house.

"It didn't answer any questions," he said after the presentation, which was more than 20 minutes. Morino said there was no growing operation when he bought the house, and he expressed concern his reputation was harmed because of the inspection.

Councillor Moe Gill said the concern is not related to it being a growing operation. "It is a safety concern," Gill said.

A report from Abbotsford city staff is to be forthcoming.

Source: Abbotsford Times, 23 Mar 2007, and Vancouver Sun 27 Mar 2007, www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v07/n373/a01.html and.../drugnews/v07/n396/a01.html

Americans For Safe Access File a Lawsuit

The patients advocacy group Americans for Safe Access (ASA) filed a lawsuit Feb 21 in the US District Court for the Northern District of California demanding that the federal government cease issuing misinformation on medical cannabis and correct the information it has released.

"The FDA position on medical cannabis is incorrect, dishonest and a flagrant violation of laws requiring the government to base policy on sound science," said Joe Elford, Chief Counsel for Americans for Safe Access.

The suit charges a violation of the little-known Data Quality Act (DQA). The DQA requires federal agencies such as Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to rely on sound science. It also allows citizens to challenge government information believed to be inaccurate or based on faulty, unreliable data. The filing is the outcome of a more than two-year petition process and comes on the heels of a recent University of California, San Francisco study demonstrating the effectiveness of medical cannabis in treating pain in people living with HIV/AIDS.

Source: Americans for Safe Access Press Release: February 21, 2007 <http://safeaccessnow.org/article.php?id=4213>

London Compassion Society Busted

A March 24 police raid inside four units in a downtown building in London, Ontario, one of which houses the London Compassion Society, has resulted in several charges being laid and the society closing its doors until further notice. The London police street drug unit states that it found 840 cannabis plants, cannabis, psilocybin, LSD, cocaine and over \$20,000 in Canadian and US currency. [Our condolences to patients left in the lurch.]

Source: London Free Press, Mar 26 2007, www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v07/n388/a10.html



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Canadians for Safe Access
<http://www.safeaccess.ca>

Disabled Rights Alliance
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Victoria, BC V8V 2Z8
380-6660

John W. Conroy, Q.C.
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<http://www.johnconroy.com>
BCCCS

Vancouver, 604-875-0448
<http://thecompassionclub.org>

DrugSense
<http://www.drugsense.org>

Action Committee of People with Disabilities
383-4105

Canadian Cannabis Coalition
www.cannabiscoalition.ca

Canada Medical Marijuana
www.medicalmarihuana.ca

Media Awareness Project
<http://www.mapinc.org>

Drug Policy Alliance
<http://www.drugpolicy.org>

Health Canada
http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/marihuana/index_e.html
1-866-337-7705

Norml Canada
<http://www.normlcanada.org>

Treating Yourself
www.treatingyourself.com

Cannabis Research Institute
<http://www.cannabisresearchinstituteinc.com>

"Sometimes even to live is an act of courage."

- Seneca, Roman rhetorician and writer (1st century AD)