

CANNABINOID CHRONICLES



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Medical Cannabis News and Information

US - Sen. McCain Ignorant of Medical Cannabis

Medical cannabis patients and supporters are publicly taking Sen. John McCain up on his challenge to provide evidence that medical cannabis patients are being arrested and that marijuana has been shown to have medical value - despite having given him the information privately already - while expressing shock at both the tone and substance of his remarks made in Exeter, New Hampshire.

Linda Macia of Manchester, a member of Granite Staters for Medical Marijuana who uses a wheelchair and suffers constant pain from nerve damage, fibromyalgia, reflex sympathetic dystrophy and degenerative arthritis, asked McCain during a Sept. 30 campaign event in Exeter whether he would commit to ending federal arrests of patients and caregivers in states that permit medical use of cannabis.

"Well first of all you'll have to show me a case where people are going in and arresting people who are dead and dying," McCain responded. "I haven't heard of such a case, nor has anyone that I know of heard of such case, so it must be a very well-kept secret." While saying that he "would strongly disapprove of" arresting suffering patients, he continued, "You may be one of the unique cases in America that only medical marijuana can relieve pain from. Every medical expert that I know of, including the AMA, says there are much more effective and much more, uh, better treatments for pain."

"I was shocked and hurt by McCain's condescending tone," Macia said. "And while I spoke, I could feel his negativity toward me and the subject I was talking about. I was astonished that he claimed not to know that patients are being arrested. How could he not know this? How can the Senator not be aware of scientific studies that have shown that marijuana helps many people like me for whom conventional medications have failed? How dare he make light of my question and the information I shared with him?"

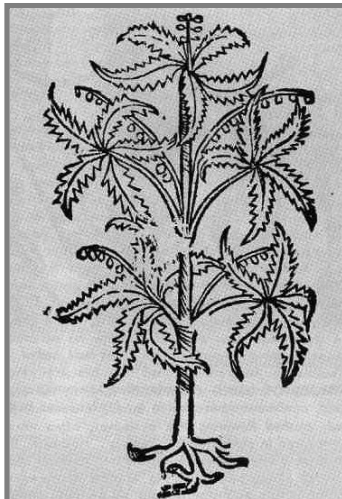
"I've personally handed Senator McCain the evidence he claimed didn't exist," said GSMM campaign manager Stuart Cooper. "But apparently the senator only listens when he's challenged publicly, so here's the evidence he's ignoring: First, just a month ago, DEA agents in a regional drug task force arrested Leonard French, a paraplegic who was one of the first patients to enroll in New Mexico's medical marijuana program. That case was widely covered by the Santa Fe New Mexican, the Associated Press and other

media outlets. If the senator's staff knows how to use Google, they should have no trouble learning about this 'well-kept secret'."

"Regarding medical experts, I guess McCain is saying he's never heard of the American Public Health Association, the American Nurses Association, or the state medical societies of New York, California, and Rhode Island. He might also want to read the University of California study published in February in the journal *Neurology*, in which medical marijuana was shown to relieve a type of debilitating nerve pain for which there are no FDA-approved treatments."

Complete video of the encounter is posted on YouTube at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rAlH1oZONfU>
Source: Manchester, New Hampshire based Granite Staters for Medical Marijuana. Edited by: Michael Hess, October 03 2007



Caput. lxxvij.

Crude woodcut illustration of cannabis from the 1517 edition of the European herbal *Ortus sanitatis de herbis et plantis*.

US - DEA Implicated In Suicide

US DEA agents can sleep a little easier. They now have one less medical cannabis patient to worry about policing. That's because Montana's leading medical cannabis patient-activist, Robin Prosser, took her own life in October, a direct result of DEA actions earlier this year. Remarkably, the US federal government continues to harass and prosecute very sick individuals who happen to use cannabis as their preferred medicine.

For 22 years, Ms. Prosser suffered the ravages of systemic lupus, a chronic condition that causes the immune system to attack one's own organs and tissues. For Robin, lupus meant a life of unrelenting pain and diverse, horrific side effects. She was allergic to most of the prescription drugs her physicians tried. Only medical cannabis brought her the relief and comfort that made living bearable.

In 2002, Prosser made national news by conducting a hunger strike to protest her inability to acquire and use marijuana legally. In 2004, she played an active role in Montana's medical marijuana initiative campaign, appearing in TV and radio ads and writing letters to newspapers about the initiative's importance. Also in 2004, Prosser attempted suicide. Earlier this year, the DEA intercepted a shipment of legal medicine that was on its way to Robin. Since then, the living hell of her body's condition reawakened, as many registered caregivers in Montana became too afraid of the government to supply her with medicine. In the end, Robin couldn't endure waiting months for more cannabis. Let Robin Prosser be the last casualty of the US federal war on medical cannabis.

Source: Helen a Independent Record, Oct 30, 2007,
<http://www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v07/n1258/a09.html>

IACM: On 5-6 October the IACM held its 4th Conference on Cannabinoids in Medicine in Cologne. Below are some excerpts:

(1) British researchers evaluated the long-term tolerance and efficacy of a cannabis extract (Sativex) in patients suffering from rheumatoid arthritis. 38 out of 53 eligible subjects entered the long-term study. 70% of patients completed more than three months treatment, and 51% more than six. Improvements in pain and sleep quality similar in magnitude to those noted in the acute study were recorded, and there was no evidence of tolerance to these beneficial effects or escalation of Sativex dosage over time.

(Abstract by Robson et al.)

(2) Canadian researchers conducted a pilot study comparing four potencies of herbal cannabis (0, 2.5, 6 and 9.5% THC) in patients with neuropathic pain. 23 patients with chronic neuropathic pain due to trauma or surgery who were not current cannabis users received the four potencies in four five-day periods separated by nine-day periods. Researchers concluded that smoking 25mg (one puff) of 9.5% THC herbal cannabis three times daily for five days has a modest analgesic effect on chronic neuropathic pain and improves sleep. The drug was well-tolerated. (Abstract by Ware et al.)

(3) Spanish researchers showed that cannabinoids prevent the development of peripheral neuropathy and alterations in gastrointestinal transit induced by chronic chemotherapy in the rat. The chemotherapeutic agent cisplatin induced a delay in weight gain and neuropathy and a delay in intestinal transit. When a synthetic cannabinoid was administered together with cisplatin, both neuropathy and delay in intestinal transit were prevented.

(Abstract by Abalo et al.)

(4) Israeli researchers presented evidence that endocannabinoid and/or CB1 receptor insufficiency underlies infant failure-to-thrive in mouse models. They concluded that cannabinoid-based treatment should be considered to improve food intake and weight gain in infants with failure-to-thrive or with growth failure.

(5) German researchers presented retrospective data on the effects of oral dronabinol (THC) in 124 patients with chronic pain. Mean pain intensity before treatment was 7.6 and was reduced to 4.2 during treatment with dronabinol. Researchers concluded that treatment of severely ill pain patients with dronabinol in advanced stages of chronicity proved to be highly effective and well tolerated. (Abstract by Konrad et al.)

Source: Abstract book available for download on the IACM website at: www.cannabis-med.org/meeting/cologne2007/reader.pdf

IACM: During an evening dinner the IACM honoured four persons for special achievements regarding the re-introduction of cannabis and cannabinoids as medicine. The IACM Award 2007 for Clinical Research goes to Donald Abrams, the IACM Award 2007 for Basic Research goes to Mauro Maccarrone, the IACM Award 2007 for Young Researchers goes to Giovanni Marsicano, and the IACM Special Award 2007 goes to Raphael Mechoulam.

Science: Protection of the heart

In experimental studies it was observed that cannabinoids protect the heart during decreased blood and oxygen supply. CB1-receptors are present mainly on endothelial cells in the heart, and exert their protective effects through production of nitric oxide. In contrast, CB2-receptors present on heart cells exert a protective effect independent of this endothelial factor.

Source: Lepicier P. et al. Life Sci, 24 Sep 2007

Science: Depression

In an animal model for depression a synthetic cannabinoid (WIN55,212-2) showed anti-depressant effects. This effect was CB1-receptor dependent and mediated by the serotonin receptor (5-HT-receptor).

Source: Bambico FR, et al. J Neurosci 2007;27(43):11700-11711

Science: Driving

An international working group of 11 experts from six countries suggests a limit of 7-10 ng/mL THC in blood serum for driving under the influence of cannabis. This would compare to a blood alcohol concentration of about 0.05 per cent. The group states that zero-limit laws, which are in effect in several countries and in several states of the USA, are not science-based and classify many non-impaired drivers as being under the influence of cannabis.

Source: Grotenhermen F. et al. Addiction 2007 Oct 4

Science: Cannabis extract effective without development of tolerance in 2-year trial

According to a British study on patients with multiple sclerosis, who suffered from neuropathic pain, a cannabis spray (Sativex) maintained its efficacy in reducing pain over the whole period of two years. Following a five-week controlled study, which was completed by 64 patients, who either received the cannabis extract Sativex or a placebo, 63 patients entered an open-label extension study. The mean duration of the open-label treatment was 463 days. 34 patients completed more than one year and 28 completed the whole study (range: 701-917 days). 17 patients withdrew due to adverse effects of the study medication.

The mean pain score for all patients at entry into the initial short term controlled trial was 6.5. Mean pain scores in the final week of the acute study was 3.8 in the group receiving cannabis and 5.0 in the placebo group. In the 28 patients who completed the 2-year follow up the mean pain score in the final week of treatment was 2.9. 92% of patients experienced at least one adverse effect, which were usually mild to moderate. There were two serious adverse effects, one cardiac arrhythmia and one collapse, which occurred in the same patient and needed hospitalization.

Researchers concluded that the cannabis extract was effective without development of tolerance to the pain-relieving effects of the drug over an extended period of time without the necessity to increase the dose of the drug. The study is available online at: http://www.clinicaltherapeutics.com/articles/2068_rog.pdf

Source: Rog DJ, et al. Oromucosal delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol/cannabinoid for neuropathic pain associated with multiple sclerosis: an uncontrolled, open-label, 2-year extension trial. Clin Ther 2007;29(9):2068-79.

Science: Psychosis

An article of a British researcher compares the research on the association between alcohol and psychosis with the research on the association between cannabis and psychosis from a historical point of view. Parallels from the research into the psychological consequences of alcohol use are drawn with the current debate around the link between cannabis and psychosis, "urging caution in too rapid an assertion that cannabis is necessarily 'causal'."

Source: Crome IB. Crim Behav Ment Health 2007;17(4):204-14



Left: Philippe Lucas and Raphael Mechoulam at the IACM conference in Cologne. Mechoulam identified the chemical structure of THC in 1964. **Right:** Philippe presenting at IACM conference.

Hemp: Ten Myths and Realities

Myth #1: US law has always treated hemp and cannabis the same.

Reality: The history of federal drug laws clearly shows that at one time the US government understood and accepted the distinction between hemp and cannabis.

Myth #2: Smoking industrial hemp gets a person high.

Reality: The THC levels in industrial hemp are so low that no one could get high from smoking it.

Myth #3: Even though THC levels are low in hemp, the THC can be extracted and concentrated to produce a powerful drug.

Reality: Extracting THC from industrial hemp and further refining it to eliminate the preponderance of CBD would require such an expensive, hazardous, and time-consuming process that it is extremely unlikely anyone would ever attempt it, rather than simply obtaining high-THC marijuana instead (duh?).

Myth #4: Hemp fields would be used to hide marijuana plants.

Reality: Hemp is grown quite differently from marijuana. Moreover, it is harvested at a different time than marijuana. Finally, cross-pollination between hemp plants and marijuana plants would significantly reduce the potency of cannabis plants.

Myth #5: Legalizing hemp while continuing the prohibition on marijuana would burden local police forces.

Reality: In countries where hemp is grown as an agricultural crop, the police have experienced no such burdens.

Myth #6: Feral hemp must be eradicated because it can be sold as cannabis.

Reality: Feral hemp, or ditchweed, is a remnant of the hemp once grown on more than 400,000 acres by US farmers. It contains extremely low levels of THC, as low as 0.05%. It has no drug value, but does offer important environmental benefits as a nesting habitat for birds. About 99% of the "marijuana" being eradicated by the US federal government - at great public expense - is this harmless ditchweed.

Myth #7: Those who want to legalize hemp are actually seeking a backdoor way to legalize cannabis.

Reality: It is true that many of the first hemp stores were started by industrial-hemp advocates who were also in favour of legalizing cannabis. However, as the hemp industry has matured, it has come to be dominated by those who see hemp as the agricultural and industrial crop that it is.

Myth #8: Hemp oil is a source of THC.

Reality: Hemp oil is an increasingly popular product, used for an expanding variety of purposes. The washed hemp seed contains no THC at all. The tiny amounts of THC contained in industrial hemp are in the glands of the plant itself. Sometimes, in the manufacturing process, some THC- and CBD-containing resin sticks to the seed, resulting in traces of THC in the oil that is produced. The concentration of these cannabinoids in the oil is infinitesimal.

Myth #9: Legalizing hemp would send the wrong message to kids.

Reality: It is the current refusal of the drug enforcement agencies to distinguish between an agricultural crop and a drug crop that is sending the wrong message to children.

Myth #10: Hemp is not economically viable, and should therefore be outlawed.

Reality: The market for hemp products is growing rapidly. But even if it were not, when has a crop ever been outlawed simply because a government thought it would be unprofitable to grow?

Source: Hemp and Marijuana: Myths & Realities, by David P. West, Ph.D. for the North American Industrial Hemp Council, 1998.

Flogging a Dead Horse

Arguments by two North Dakota farmers who say they have a right to grow industrial hemp cannot change "unambiguous" federal law prohibiting commercial cultivation of the plant, US Justice Department lawyers say. Farmers Dave Monson and Wayne Hauge also have no more standing to sue than someone who wants to use drugs recreationally, the lawyers said in their response to the farmers' request that a judge rule in their favor without a trial.

Monson, a state legislator who farms near Osnaebrook, and Hauge, a farmer from Ray, want a federal judge to rule that they cannot be criminally prosecuted for growing industrial hemp under the North Dakota regulations.

"The North Dakota Legislature has specifically passed a law allowing farmers in this state to grow industrial hemp," Tim Purdon, the attorney for the farmers, said Friday. "So the farmers in this state who wish to do that are very different from some hypothetical plaintiff who wants to grow marijuana."

The state licenses that Monson and Hauge have to grow industrial hemp are worthless without DEA approval, and the agency has not acted on the farmers' applications. Hemp falls under federal anti-drug rules because it has trace amounts of the psychoactive cannabinoid THC that is found in hemp's cousin, cannabis.

Government lawyers argue that there are ways to make plants with lower THC concentrations produce a high.

(See Hemp Myth #3 in adjacent article.)

Source: Jamestown Sun, 27 Oct 2007.

<http://www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v07/n1259/a02.html>



Chinese characters TA MA, the oldest known name for cannabis

- TA (pronounced DA). Literally this means an adult man, and by extension may signify great or tall.

- MA. It represents a fiber plant, literally a clump of plants, growing near a dwelling. Hence, the two symbols together mean "the tall fiber plant," which everywhere in China signifies cannabis.

Cover and this picture from http://www.erowid.org/library/books_online/golden_guide/g31-40.shtml

DEFINITIONS

duress *n.* threats or violence used to coerce a person into doing something: confessions extracted under duress. [originally in the sense 'harshness, cruel treatment': from Latin *durus* 'hard'] (The Oxford Dictionary Online, <http://www.askoxford.com>)

mullock *n.* 1 Austral./NZ or dialect rubbish or nonsense. 2 Austral./NZ rock which contains no gold or from which gold has been extracted. [from obsolete *mul* dust, rubbish, from Dutch] (ibid.)

polemic *n.* 1 a strong verbal or written attack. 2 (also polemics) the practice of engaging in controversial debate. *adj.* (also polemical) of or involving disputatious or controversial debate. [from Greek *polemikos*, from *polemos* 'war'] (ibid.)

respite *n.* a short period of rest or relief from something difficult or unpleasant. [from Old French *respit*, from Latin *respectus* 'refuge, consideration'] (ibid.)

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Cannabis Arrests Increase By 6% in US

Police arrested a record 829,625 persons for cannabis violations in 2006, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's annual Uniform Crime Report, released Sept. 24, 2007. This is the largest total number of annual arrests for cannabis ever recorded by the FBI. Cannabis arrests now comprise nearly 44% of all drug arrests in the United States.

"These numbers belie the myth that police do not target and arrest minor marijuana offenders," said NORML Executive Director Allen St. Pierre, who noted that at current rates, a cannabis smoker is arrested every 38 seconds in the US. "This effort is a tremendous waste of criminal justice resources that diverts law enforcement personnel away from focusing on serious and violent crime, including the war on terrorism."

Of those charged with marijuana violations, approximately 89%, 738,915 Americans were charged with possession only. The remaining 90,710 individuals were charged with "sale/manufacture," a category that includes all cultivation offences, even those where the cannabis was being grown for personal or medical use. In past years, roughly 30% of those arrested were age 19 or younger.

Source: NORML, Washington, DC, Sept. 24, 2007.
http://www.norml.org/index.cfm?Group_ID=7370

Prohibition Numbers

According to a report published on DrugScience.org cannabis prohibition costs nearly \$42 billion US per year in criminal justice costs and in lost tax revenues in the United States. According to the analysis, law enforcement spends \$10.7 billion annually to arrest and prosecute cannabis offenders. In addition, prohibition would deprive taxpayers of \$31.1 billion annually. The report is available at: <http://www.drugscience.org/bcr/index.html>

Source: DrugScience.org of October 2007

THANKS: We at the VICS are always working to serve and help our members the best we can. Additionally, there are always people and critters in the background to help things happen more smoothly. Huge thanks go out to Mat, webmaster at Media Awareness Project (check them out at www.mapinc.org), Deb, our webpage overseer, big Ed, provider of the beastly BBQ used at our latest birthday party (sorry we forgot last issue), and everyone who contributed to the reimbursement fund for D's new computer (that's our kind of family). And thanks to our two lawyers, John and Kirk, who have toiled on the VICS behalf during our constitutional challenge. PEACE AND LOVE, eh?.

Swiss Study of Adolescent Cannabis Use

A Swiss study, titled Some Go Without a Cigarette - Characteristics of Cannabis Users Who Have Never Smoked Tobacco, investigated the prevalence of adolescent cannabis-only use and the characteristics that differentiate them from those using both cannabis and tobacco or neither.

A survey was completed by 5263 students (46% female) aged 16 to 20 years divided into cannabis-only smokers (9%), cannabis and tobacco smokers (32%), and abstainers (59%). It measured regular tobacco and cannabis use, and personal, family, academic, and substance use characteristics.

Compared with those using both substances, cannabis-only youth were younger and more likely to be male, to play sports, to live with both parents, to be students, and to have good grades and less likely to have been drunk, to have started using cannabis before the age of 15 years, to have used cannabis more than once or twice in the previous month, and to perceive their pubertal timing as early.

Compared with abstainers, they were more likely to be male, to have a good relationship with friends, to be sensation seeking, and to practice sports and less likely to have a good relationship with their parents. They were more likely to attend high school, to skip class, and to have been drunk or to have used illicit drugs.

The study concludes that cannabis-only adolescents show better functioning than those who also use tobacco. Compared with abstainers, they are more socially driven and do not seem to have psychosocial problems at a higher rate.

The complete report is available online at: <http://archpedi.ama-assn.org/current.dtl>.

Source: Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine
<http://archpedi.ama-assn.org>



RESOURCE DIRECTORY:

AIDS Vancouver Island

1601 Blanshard, 384-2366

V.P.W.A.

330-1105 Pandora, 382-7927

MS Society

1004 N.Park, 388-6496

HepC BC

306-620 View, 595-3892

Canadians for Safe Access

<http://www.safeaccess.ca>

Disabled Rights Alliance

15-950 Humboldt St.

Victoria, BC V8V 2Z8

380-6660

John W. Conroy, Q.C.

1-877-852-5110 (toll free)

<http://www.johnconroy.com>

BCCCS

Vancouver, 604-875-0448

<http://thecompassionclub.org>

DrugSense

<http://www.drugsense.org>

Action Committee of People with Disabilities

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Canadian Cannabis Coalition

www.cannabiscoalition.ca

Canada Medical Marijuana

www.medicalmarijuana.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>

Cannabis Health

www.cannabishealth.com

ICRS

<http://cannabinoidsociety.org>

CannabisLinks.ca

"First, we must accept reality: Drugs, including alcohol and tobacco, are here today. Not all drug users are abusers, and not all abusers become addicts. Once we acknowledge these fundamental truths, the responsible approach for dealing with drugs becomes clear." - Vancouver Police Constable Gil Puder