



DOCTORS WARN: CANNABIS CAN CAUSE SERIOUS HEALTH HAZARDS

IASIC, the International Academy on the Science and Impact of Cannabis, is a medical organization of doctors who educate on marijuana based on the scientific and medical literature. IASIC is a non-partisan and non-political group created to facilitate informed decisions when considering cannabis policy and law.

It is our conclusion, based on review of the scientific evidence, that public health effects of high potency cannabis are harmful. These growing negative impacts further strain health care and addiction treatment resources to an extent that far surpasses taxation revenues.

Evidence: Thousands of peer reviewed medical articles have been published on the harms of cannabis and marijuana. Reviews of medical benefits of cannabis published in highly ranked journals reveal only limited benefits for rare conditions, and generally do not consider long term consequences.

Emergency Department (ED) Visits: The San Diego Marijuana Prevention Initiative report reflect 29 emergency visits a day for cannabis related illnesses.¹ In a large urban hospital in Colorado cannabis-related ED visits more than tripled from 2012 to 2016.² A 2017 study showed that in adolescent cannabis ED visits, approximately 71% were given a psychiatric diagnosis.³

Psychosis: There is strong evidence for severe mental health problems triggered by cannabis. Multiple studies link regular cannabis use to an estimated doubling of the risk of a psychotic illness; the resulting psychosis can become permanent and a lifelong disability.⁴ Violent

behavior as a result of cannabis-induced paranoia and psychosis is a growing concern.⁵ A 2019 study from Lancet Psychiatry found that if high-potency cannabis were no longer available, 12.2% of cases of first-episode psychosis could be prevented; in some places avoiding heavy cannabis use could prevent up to 50% of psychosis cases.⁶

Suicide: There is significant evidence linking cannabis use and suicide, especially in teens and young adults. A 2019 review of multiple publications found that adolescent cannabis use was associated with increased depression in young adulthood and a tripling of the risk of a suicide attempt.⁷ Marijuana is the most prevalent substance found in completed teen suicide in the state of Colorado.⁸ Evidence suggests that self-harm increases by 46% in young men in states that commercialize cannabis.⁹

Brain Development: It is well established that brain development starts in utero and continues until the mid 20s. Use of any addicting drug during this time period increases the likelihood of addiction.¹⁰ Heavy cannabis use has shown visible negative alterations in both brain structure and function.^{11,12} The ABCD study on adolescent brain cognitive development found that psychosis increased in offspring when the mother continued cannabis after she was aware she was pregnant.¹³ The study continues to track the health of thousands of kids over time.

Neonatal Exposure: Cannabis use is not recommended in pregnancy and is associated with low birth weight¹⁴ and future cognitive and emotional problems in children.¹⁵ Despite these known risks, a recent investigation into regulated cannabis dispensaries in Colorado found that employees, when asked, recommended cannabis for pregnancy-associated morning sickness 69% of the time and usually did not recommend speaking to the woman's physician first.¹⁶

Opioid Crisis: Cannabis use has been shown to increase the likelihood of opioid use disorder and opioid misuse.^{17,18} In the United States, 81,000 drug overdose deaths in 2020 represents a 12.5% increase from

the year before. Medical marijuana states have 23% higher opioid overdose deaths than states without medical marijuana.¹⁹

Traffic Fatalities: The risk of car collisions increases two-fold after smoking cannabis.²⁰ Traffic fatalities increased in the first four states to legalize recreational marijuana compared to states without legal marijuana.²¹

High Potency Use, Problematic and Youth Use: Higher cannabis shop density has been associated with 6.8% increase in marijuana related hospitalizations.²² Limiting the availability of high potency cannabis may be associated with decreased marijuana addiction and mental illness.²³

Cannabis Hyperemesis Syndrome: CHS is now commonly recognized as presenting to EDs in long term cannabis users. CHS is potentially fatal and associated with painful retching, vomiting, and abdominal pain.²⁴

Conclusions: We recognize that there are many sides to the marijuana debate, and we call attention to the growing science on public health risk. Tobacco was promoted as relatively harmless before nicotine addiction became ubiquitous and the link to lung cancer was proven. The opioid industry marketed its drugs as non-addictive and safe in the early 1990s, and we are still paying the price. Let's learn from our historical mistakes and not repeat them with marijuana. Drug addiction and death have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. We urgently need smart public health policies that follow the science, prevent addiction, and decrease mental illness including psychosis, depression, and suicide.

IASIC, The International Association on Science and Impact of Cannabis, hopes lawmakers and voters will follow the science and promote public health.

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IASIC International Academy on the Science and Impact of Cannabis

Purpose statement:

The purpose of IASIC is to counter the pervasive misperception of the safety of marijuana, and to be an international organization providing reliable scientific information for leaders who are in positions to drive policy recommendations. This non-partisan and non-political group is strictly developed, organized, and guided by doctors.

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