Mary Jane: The Devil Weed Essay, Research Paper

Mary Jane: The Devil Weed

ABSTRACT: This paper, entitled “Mary Jane: The Devil Weed?” attempts to

examine what we know about marijuana and what problems are associated with its

use. The paper examines briefly the history of marijuana legislation,

marijuana’s known effects, and conclusions about its danger.

Early in this century, the government waged a war of terrorism on marijuana,

or cannabis sativa. “By 1937, forty-six states had laws against the use of

marijuana, and its use had already been made a criminal offense under federal

law” (Jaffe, 659). Andrews pointed out that “not until some time in the early

1930s did the Louisianna legislature pass a state regulation making use of the

drug illegal” (5). Jaffe noted that “since the early 1900s, marifuana has been

considered the one drug that might introduce the susceptible to hard drugs.”

Jaffe pointed out that “since about 1950…. smoking of marijuana has been

linked statistically to the use of other illicit drugs….Most observers have

concluded that the link is sociological rather than biological and…marijuana

is a marker for individuals who are more prone to seek new experiences even when

these violate social norms and local laws.”

Andrews related that “sensational newspaper stories relating…to crime is

generally held to be accountable for the sudden enactment of a law prohibiting

its use.” He went on to note that “users were often subject to heavy penalties-

-up to life imprisonment in Texas.” “After caffeine, nicotine and alcohol,

marijuana is the fourth most popular abused substance” (O’Brien, Cohen, Evans,

and Fine, 175).

does marijuana deserve this reputation? We must first consider what it is

and what effects it has. The active ingredient is tetrahydocannabinol, or THC

(Andrews). THC, found only in the female plant, produces a mild euphoric effect.

Marijuana is considered a hallucinogen, a Schedule 1 drup, under the Controlled

Substances Act of 1970 (O’Brien, Cohen, Evans, and Fine, 177). A Schedule 1

drug means there is no known medical use. Recently “a new drug application was

approved for THC (Marinol) to be used therapeutically for control of nausea and

vomiting associated with cancer chemotherapy” (Jaffe, 663). This moved THC from

Schedule 1 to 2 (medical use despite potential for abuse).

How dangerous is marijuana? Jaffe notes that “any performance test shows

impairment….although no distinctive biochemical changes have been found in

humans.” Andrews writes, “Physical effects of marijuana use is probably the

major question….The answer? None.” O’Brien, Cohen, Evans, and Fine, reported

that the National Institute on Drug Abuse found, “Marijunan now available is

five to 10 times more potent than it was a half dozen years ago” (178). While

these statements may not sound conclusive, the Institute of Medicine, according

to O’Brien, Cohen, Evans, and Fine, found, “What little we know now about the

effects of marijuana on human health–and all we have reasons to suspect–

justifies serious national concern.” They noted, “More research has

demonstrated marked disturbances in depth perception, time judgment, and

coordination during cannabis use. Coupled with surveys that that indicate that

many traffic accidents occur to people using cannabis derivatives, these facts

raise a significant public health concern.”

Is marijuana “devil weed”? Though marijuana “does not produce physical

dependence,” it does produce “psychological dependence and the euphoric and

sedative effects can result” (O’Brien, Cohen, Evans, and Fine, 179). They noted

also, “Abstinence may result in feelings of irritability, nervousness, or

insomnia.” Jaffe observed that cannabis “may directly produce an acute panic

reaction, a toxic delirium,and accute paranoid state, or acute mania… [It may}

lead to sociopathy or even to the so-called AMOTIVATIONAL SYNDROME... [and]

aggravate schizophrenia” (661).

Again we ask, Is marijuana “devil weed”? In conclusion we must say that

marijuana might be, but the evidence is far from conclusive and far from

complete. That marijuana is a public health problem is clear. Marijuana is a

dangerous substance for individuals to use and operate a motor vehicle of any

kind. That marijuana is potentially dangerous and destructive is clear.

Are there legitimate medical uses? There are some. It has been found to

redce intraocular pressures in individuals with glaucoma by 45% (Jaffe, 662). It

has been used as an antiemitic for individuals taking cancer chemotherapy.

Andrews concluded that “medical research indicates no physiological effect of

any severity from use of the drug. Thus it has been assumed marijuana is

harmless” (12).

But is marijuana “devil weed”? The answers are mixed. The conclusions

uncertain. Andrews’ answer is probably the most accurate: “Perhaps so. Perhaps

not. Certainly more research is necessar.” In other words, most of the

reserach and most of the scientists have indicated that all the answers are not

in yet.

WORKS CITED

Anrews, Matthew. (1972). The Parents Guide to Drugs (Doubleday & Co.).

pp. 4-12. Jaffe, Jerome H. (1995). Encylopedia of Drugs & Alcohol

(Simon & Schuster).

pp. 659-663. O’Brien, R., Cohen, S., Evans, G., and Fine, J., (Eds.).

(1992). The

Enclopedia of Drug Abuse (Facts on File, Inc.). pp. 175-179.