

Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

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“Marijuana 2018 Update”

The 2015 decision by the Obama administration not to enforce federal anti-marijuana laws marked a significant change and Americans have seen the growth of large, for-profit commercial enterprises that will saturate the country with "pot." It is estimated that around 22.2 million people in the United States have used marijuana in the past month, making it "the most commonly used illicit drug" in the country. The National Institute on Drug Abuse summarized six salient points on marijuana entitled "*Adverse Health Effects of Marijuana Use*," as follows: 1) marijuana is particularly harmful to children and youths under 21 years of age; 2) it can affect short-term memory; 3) it is associated with "significant declines in IQ" if used frequently when one is an adolescent or a young adult; 4) it impairs a person's "motor coordination; 5) it is addictive. About 9 percent of users overall become addicted, but that number rises to 17 percent of those who start as adolescents and shoots up to as much as 50 percent among those who use pot daily; and 6) it is related to social ills. Today's marijuana contains about four times as much THC, the ingredient that produces the "high," than it did in the 1980s. Last year, for example, a study linked marijuana use to a greater risk of psychosis in teenagers, while another study claimed that the drug is "worse than cigarettes" for cardiovascular health. To the contrary, researchers have found that cannabinoids—which are the active compounds in marijuana—could help to prevent migraine, and a more recent study linked marijuana use to an increased sex drive. When it comes to the brain, an older study reported that marijuana use is related to a reduction in the volume of the hippocampus. The next study then comes around, and they say that marijuana use is related to changes in the cerebellum. Now, researchers have asked, "Which is more damaging for the brain with marijuana vs alcohol?" With alcohol, we've known it's bad for the brain for decades but here has been little data on marijuana. Current researchers found that alcohol use—particularly in adults who had been drinking for many years—was associated with a reduction in gray matter volume, as well as a reduction in the integrity of white matter. Marijuana use, however, appeared to have no impact on the structure of gray or white matter in either teenagers or adults. Gray matter is the tissue on the brain's surface and white matter is the deeper brain tissue that contains myelinated nerve fibers.

In the America that I love, the progressive movement is determined to legalize pot in all fifty states. They are winning that battle. Stay tuned for updates.

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