All About Marijuana
Research, Trends, and Truth
Manatee County Substance Abuse Coalition
March 13, 2013
Marijuana: The Truth
Overview

- Most commonly used illicit drug in the US
- 94 million Americans + (40%) age 12 and older have tried marijuana at least once*
- 23% of substance abuse admissions are for marijuana alone*
- 4% of US population meets criteria for marijuana dependence*
- Probably the most controversial drug of abuse in the US*

* Citations Available
Marijuana Epidemiology

- Used by **75%** of all illicit drug users*
- **50%** of all illicit drug users use only marijuana*
- Up to **79%** of marijuana users have concurrent alcohol use*
- Estimated **$15** billion per year in sales in the US*

* Citations Available
Marijuana Use Trends: Risk vs. Use

- **Risk**: % seeing “great risk” in using regularly
- **Use**: % who used in last 12 months
- **Perception of Harm**:
Marijuana Potency: Not Your Parents’ Pot

Potency of Marijuana Seizures

Up to 151% increase from 1983 to 2007

Consequences of Chronic Marijuana Use:

- Impaired learning
- Short term memory and information processing deficits
- Delayed emotional development
- Discrepancy between perception and reality
- 6-8 point DROP in IQ
- Increased risk for schizophrenia among high consumers
Consequences of Marijuana: There Aren’t Any…Right?

SPECT images (top-down surface view) depicting a normal brain vs. a brain affected by chronic marijuana use.

- Defects of this type lead to: **attention problems, disorganization, procrastination, and lack of motivation**
Marijuana: It’s Not Addictive….Right?

- **1 in 6** adolescents who try marijuana will become addicted*

- **About 10%** of all people who try marijuana will become **daily users***

- Of the 7.1M Americans addicted to illicit drugs, **marijuana is drug of choice for 63%**, or **4.5M people***

* Citations Available
Marijuana & the Economy: It will boost the US Economy…right?

Alcohol

Costs

Tobacco

Tax Revenues

$14 billion

$185 billion

$25 billion

$200 billion
Marijuana & Crime: We should treat it like alcohol…right?

2.7 million
Arrests for alcohol-related crimes in 2008
*(Does NOT include violence; Includes violations of liquor laws and driving under the influence)*

847,000
Marijuana-related arrests in 2008
Marijuana & Medicine: It is good for what ails you…right?

- Medical marijuana has been touted to be the “cure” or “reliever” of many medical conditions:
  - Alzheimer’s… fibromyalgia… dystonia… Hepatitis C… diabetes… pruritus… osteoporosis… ALS… Tourette’s Syndrome… hypertension… sleep apnea… GI disorders… incontinence… rheumatoid arthritis… pain… depression… glaucoma… tremors… seizures… epilepsy… cancer… COPD… HIV/AIDS… Crohn’s Disease… migraines… multiple sclerosis… nausea… spasticity… wasting syndrome… malaria… gout… insomnia… inflammation… muscle spasms… cerebral palsy… spinal cord injuries… ADHD… Parkinson’s disease… PTSD
Marijuana & Medicine: It is for the seriously ill...right?

- A real look at medical marijuana user demographics:
  - <5% are elderly
  - Only 10% of card holders have cancer, HIV/AIDS or glaucoma
  - 90% are registered for illnesses including headaches and athlete’s foot
  - More than 80% are young adults
  - Most card holders in CA and CO are white men between the ages of 17 and 35 with:
    - No history of chronic illness
    - History of drug and alcohol use
Marijuana: Legislation
Marijuana Legislation: Two Strategies Are At Play...

Medical Marijuana
- Relief for the terminally ill...
- Compassionate care

Decriminalization
- Stop throwing all these minor offenders in jail
- Save money & resources for real criminals
Decriminalization
Decriminalization

Medical Marijuana

- CA
- OR
- NV
- CO
- NE
- MN
- HI
- AK
- WA
- MT
- ID
- WY
- TX
- LA
- MS
- AL
- KY
- VA
- NC
- SC
- GA
- FL
- DE
- MD
- DC
- NJ
- NY
- CT
- MA
- RI
- VT
- ME
Decriminalization  Medical Marijuana  Legalized

- WA
- OR
- CA
- NV
- CO
- NE
- MN
- WI
- OH
- NC
- HI
- AK
- ME
- MA
- RI
- CT
- VT
- NY
- NJ
- DE
- DC
Decriminalization
Medical Marijuana
Legalized

Targeted for Legalization
Decriminalization  Medical Marijuana  Legalized

Targeted for Legalization  Targeted for Medical
Voting in Medical Marijuana: Bypassing the FDA process

Before FDA approves a drug as medicine, testing is done to:

- ✓ Determine the benefits and risks of the drug
- ✓ Determine how it may interact with other drugs
- ✓ Assure standardization of the drug
- ✓ Determine the appropriate dosage levels
- ✓ Identify and monitor side effects
- ✓ Identify safe drug administration
Voting in Medical Marijuana: Bypassing the FDA cost and time...

- Average FDA cost to bring a new drug to market is $1.3B
- Pharmaceutical companies spend estimated $4B-$12B for every new drug approved
- Failure rate is 80% - 1 in every 5 drugs that start the process reach approval/sales
- An average of 12 years from research lab to patient access
Decriminalizing Marijuana: Relief for the prison system...right?

Inmates in State Prisons

- 80.4% Offenses Not Involving Drugs
- 16.9% Drug Offenses Not Involving Marijuana
- 2.4% Offenses Involving Marijuana (Excluding Possession Only)
- 0.3% Marijuana Possession Only

All percentages are based on total number of State prisoners

Number of State Prisoners (2004) = 1.262 million

Support for marijuana legalization has reached unprecedented levels
Why is legalization becoming so popular?

- Issue has been **reframed**:  
  - Voting for compassion for the sick and dying  
  - Reducing our prison population and drug-related crime  
  - Stimulating the economy
- Legislative champions at all levels
- Major grassroots and student supporters
- Organized at the state level
- A “permission structure” – “it’s SENSIBLE…”
What Can We Do?

- Develop messages that are salient, compelling and that will resonate with voters and policy makers based on facts and statistics
- Mobilize and raise the funds to get your messages out in print, on radio and on TV
- Do the advocacy to beat back the opponent’s position
Why We Should Care

Academics

- Marijuana use negatively affects motivation, memory & learning.

- Kids with an average grade of D or below are more than **four times** as likely to have used marijuana in the past year than kids with an average grade of A
Why We Should Care

Jobs

- Nearly 6,600 companies nationwide, and scores of industries and professions require a pre-employment drug test.

- 6.6% of high school seniors smoke marijuana every day, rendering them virtually unemployable.
Why We Should Care

**Integrity & safety of medicine**

- There is a longstanding, effective national process in place to approve the efficacy and safety of medicines through the FDA and ballot initiatives circumvent this process.

- There is no scientific basis for using smoked marijuana as a medicine.
Why We Should Care

Environment

- Marijuana grow sites have major adverse environmental impacts:
  - Vastly increasing the amount of carbon released into the atmosphere, which negatively affects global warming
  - Vastly increasing fish kills from fertilizer runoff that creates toxic aquatic conditions
  - Poisoning watersheds with arsenic and acaricide
Why We Should Care

Youth drug use and addiction rates

- Among youth ages 12 to 17, marijuana usage rates were higher in states with medical marijuana laws (8.6%) compared with those without such laws (6.9%)
Why We Should Care

Public safety

- Marijuana is the most prevalent illegal drug detected in impaired drivers, fatally injured drivers, and motor vehicle crash victims.
- 20% of crashes in the US are caused by drugged drivers.
  - This translates into about 8,600 deaths, 580,000 injuries and $33 billion in damages each year.
- According to the Colorado Department of Transportation, drivers who tested positive for marijuana in fatal car crashes doubled between 2006 and 2010.
Why We Should Care

Economy

- The total overall costs of substance abuse in the US, including productivity, health and crime-related costs, exceeds $600 billion annually.
Conclusions

“We cannot promote a comprehensive system of mental health treatment and marijuana legalization, which increases permissiveness for a drug that directly contributes to mental illness.”

- Patrick J. Kennedy, former congressman
Conclusions

“A world of legal drugs will be a world in which the fates of the top one third of Americans and the lower two thirds will diverge even more than they already do. We have opened more roads to self-harm. Must we now open another?”

- David Frum, Daily Beast columnist
Conclusions

“The unregulated tobacco industry is a worldwide public health disaster. We should learn from our mistakes, not repeat them with marijuana.”

- Kimber Richter,
tobacco researcher, University of Kansas