

The Changing of Cannabis

The Law

In Britain today Cannabis (a.k.a. Dope, Weed, Puff

Marijuana, Skunk) is considered by the police to be an illegal, class C drug. When found in possession of Cannabis, no matter how much or how little you have, the police will take action. The penalty extends from an official warning to two years imprisonment. If found with the drug under the age of 18 your parents will be contacted and if you become a repeat offender you can end up with a criminal record.

The History

In recent years new research has emerged to suggest that Cannabis, in some controlled medical conditions can be beneficial. A recent BBC* article claimed that its effects have been proven by scientific investigations to be beneficial to sufferers of various medical conditions, including cancer, HIV, multiple sclerosis, and glaucoma. As well as this, the BBC reported that wide-scale trials in the UK have shown that 'cannabis appears to be able to help reduce the side effects of chemotherapy treatment given to cancer patients'. It should be considered though that the British Medical Association does not 100% support this report. The BMA says that crude cannabis contains many toxic ingredients, although they support the development of medicines using cannabis; the British government states it won't consider legalising cannabis for medical use until the completion of clinical trials.

The Risks

This does not in any way mean that Cannabis is a safe recreational activity. According to FRANK (www.talktofrank.com) the risks of taking Cannabis in any form can include feelings of panic, lose of coordination, the risk of lung cancer, high blood pressure and an increased risk of mental health problems to list a few. And if that didn't put you off then you should know that Cannabis has also been shown to lower a man's sperm count as well as decreasing a woman's chances of conceiving a baby. According to the BBC*:

- Cannabis contains more tar than tobacco, and has a higher concentration of carcinogens (cancer-causing agents).
- 44% of 16 to 29 year-olds have tried cannabis at some point in their lives. Half of them have used it in the last year.
- In 1998, 76% of people arrested for drugs offences in Britain were charged with possession of cannabis.
- In the eyes of the law supplying drugs also means passing a joint to your mate and you can get up to 14 years in prison for it.
- Smoking marijuana is more popular in America than surfing the Internet!

The Future

For years the government together with schools and other education institutions has drummed into the youth of Britain the fact that Cannabis has the power to destroy you both mentally and physically. However, in the future, with new clinical research being undertaken by scientists across the globe, will Cannabis be legalised to heal instead of hinder?

By Amy Solman