14213 Jennifer Andrews – Persuasive Speech

Medical Marijuana

1. Medical Marijuana – Medicine or Illegal Drug
2. Medical Marijuana has been under scrutiny since the 1970’s with proponents arguing for its use as a medical treatment for various illnesses and opponents arguing that it is a dangerous illegal drug and should be treated as all other illegal drugs.
3. Diseases it can treat
4. Originally marijuana was designated a Schedule 1 Controlled Substance and was considered to have no medical use. In the years since then at least 23 of the 50 United States and Washington DC have passed legislation to legalize the medical use of marijuana.
5. Supporters of medical marijuana promote the belief that medical marijuana can safely treat the symptoms of many illnesses. Among those are cancer, Aids, Multiple Sclerosis, pain, glaucoma, epilepsy and others. The term “medical marijuana” is generally used to refer to the whole unprocessed marijuana plant or its crude extracts, there is much research into the content and possible uses of marijuana. The main ingredients in it are called THC and CBD as well as cannabinoids. These ingredients are being researched by the NIH to discover the possible medical uses of them to treat various diseases.
6. Those diseases include autoimmune diseases, cancer, inflammation, pain, seizures, substance use disorders and other psychiatric disorders. THC stimulates appetite and reduces nausea while CBD is a non-psychoactive cannabinoid that may also be useful in reducing pain and inflammation, controlling epileptic seizures, and possibly even treating psychosis and addictions.
7. Due to the different symptoms of medical issues the plant ingredients can be scientifically “bred” to affect just those symptoms and work toward treating them while reducing the hallucinogenic effects of the drug. An FDA-approved drug called **Dronabinol**(Marinol®) contains THC and is used to treat nausea caused by chemotherapy and wasting disease (extreme weight loss) caused by AIDS. Another FDA-approved drug called **Nabilone**(Cesamet®) contains a synthetic cannabinoid similar to THC and is used for the same purposes. A drug called **Sativex®**, which contains approximately equal parts THC and CBD, is currently approved in the UK and several European countries to treat spasticity caused by multiple sclerosis (MS), and it is now in Phase III clinical trials in the U.S. to establish its effectiveness and safety in treating cancer pain. Although it has not yet undergone clinical trials to establish its effectiveness and safety (necessary to obtain FDA approval), a CBD-based drug called **Epidiolex™** has recently been created to treat certain forms of childhood epilepsy. Some parents of children with a severe form of epilepsy called Dravet Syndrome have reported success in using a high-CBD strain of marijuana to control seizures in their children.
8. Why the delay in approval by the FDA
9. Supporters keep asking why medical marijuana has not been approved by the FDA yet. So far, there have not been enough large-scale clinical trials showing that benefits of the marijuana plant (as opposed to specific cannabinoid constituents) outweigh its risks in patients with the symptoms it is meant to treat.
10. There is also concern that if the drug is legalized that teens would return to increased use of the drug for recreational purposes. Within the FDA studies certain safety concerns include impairment of short-term memory, altered judgment and decision making, mood effects, anxiety or paranoia or even psychosis. Additionally, although we do not yet know whether marijuana smoking contributes to lung cancer risk, it can cause or worsen other respiratory problems such as bronchitis or chronic cough.
11. Doctors must always compare the risks involved with a drug with the possible dangers of a drug to determine if it is a good drug for patients to take. Medical Marijuana can have obvious physical risks that effect the person who takes the medicine while also offering great medical benefits. This decision has social and legal implications but there are also financial considerations.
12. The financial issues include the IRS tax laws, IRC Code 280E that prohibits the deduction of normal business expenses from income derived through the sale of illegal drugs. The CARERS Act removes marijuana from the illegal drug category in states with medical marijuana programs, thus making a marijuana-based business financially viable. The change in the status of medical marijuana will make it possible for medical marijuana to be transported across state lines. In addition, with marijuana now being classified as a legal drug it could possibly be covered under patient’s health care plan. Last, this change could remove the sale of marijuana from the federal anti-money laundering statutes.
13. All of these changes can come together to make medical marijuana medically acceptable, socially acceptable, financially feasible and an acceptable business.

On a final note I’d like to share a personal story to show why I think it is so important for medical marijuana to be made legal. My dad was diagnosed with brain cancer. Doctors told him he should smoke marijuana to help with the side effects from his treatments. Since my dad was a police officer so he absolutely refused. It didn’t matter if it would help him or not. As long as this drug was classified as illegal my dad would not break the law. Changing this law would make it possible for my dad and others like him to find some relief from severe pain when nothing else offers any relief.

There is much more information available on this subject. I encourage each of you to research this and come to your own conclusion and not just listen to the most vocal side of this discussion. Can marijuana be used as an illegal drug? Yes. Can other legal drugs be misused? Yes. But, I say that the misuse by some should not prevent the proper research, use and prescription of a drug by doctors and patients when there is clear proof that this drug could offer the patient the needed relief.

Sources:

<http://medicalmarijuana.procon.org/>

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/adam-bierman/medical-marijuana-carers-act_b_6890256.html>

<http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/marijuana-medicine>