



MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF PREVENTION  
PROFESSIONALS AND ADVOCATES

POSITION STATEMENT ON MARIJUANA FOR MEDICINAL USE

**MAPPAA does not support marijuana for medicinal use. Crude marijuana is not medicine. It is a harmful psychoactive drug, composed of over 400 different chemicals, which are transformed into 2,000 compounds when burned and smoked. The drug contains at least 70 chemical cannabinoids of which delta 9 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is the most potent psychoactive or mind-altering chemical, but other cannabinoids also affect the brain. Only a few of these chemicals have been studied scientifically to determine their effect on health and behavior.**

- ♣ In 2003, Maryland approved the Medical Marijuana Bill. Under the measure, people who can prove medical necessity would not face jail time for marijuana possession. The most they would face is a \$100 fine. Maryland was the ninth state to pass a law that would relax punishment of people caught with marijuana, provided they can prove they are using it for medical reasons. (source: [www.mpp.org/MD/news\\_4527.html](http://www.mpp.org/MD/news_4527.html)) MAPPAA opposes this legislation as it has the potential to open the gate to further drug legalization.
- ♣ Not one American health organization accepts marijuana as medicine. These include the American Medical Association, National Multiple Sclerosis Society, American Glaucoma Society, American Academy of Ophthalmology, and American Cancer Society. Physicians who treat people for cancer, AIDS, glaucoma, and other diseases do not favor the use of marijuana over the more effective treatments that are available.
- ♣ There is no reliable scientific evidence that smoked marijuana is an accepted or effective medical treatment for any illness. Marijuana has serious health consequences. Concentration, motor coordination, memory, lungs, reproductive and immune systems are all adversely impacted by marijuana use.

- ♣ Marijuana is addictive. This addiction has been well described in scientific marijuana literature. Marijuana causes both a physical dependence and a psychological habituation.
- ♣ The federal Food and Drug Administration and the Drug Enforcement Administration have repeatedly rejected marijuana for medical use. Marijuana fails to meet any of the DEA requirements or FDA's eight criteria for approving drugs for medical use.
- ♣ Science must prevail over ideology. There is no rational basis for exempting marijuana from the standard approval process. Anecdotal claims about medical benefits of smoked marijuana are insufficient grounds to subvert the protections that Americans rely upon.
- ♣ The pro-drug lobby would have the public and policy makers incorrectly believe that many cancer sufferers are going untreated for the nausea often associated with chemotherapy. There are newer, more effective, anti-emetics available today with fewer side effects than the older medications. Marinol, a synthesized, pure form of THC, available by prescription, is considered a third choice drug and only prescribed if all other anti-emetics fail to give relief.
- ♣ Using crude marijuana as medicine would be like eating moldy bread as medicine. Many of the medications in use today were originally isolated from a crude or "natural" product. Examples of these would be: penicillin from the blue-green mold (*penicillium notatum*); the cardiac stimulant Digoxin from the leaves of the foxglove plant; the cancer treatment Taxol from the bark of the yew tree; and Premarin, used in hormonal replacement therapy, originally isolated from pregnant mares' urine. No doctor would prescribe these medications in their crude form; all must be purified or synthesized and standardized to constitute medicine.
- ♣ Published scientific evidence is not adequate to permit experts to fairly and responsibly conclude plant marijuana is safe and effective for use in humans. Medical research is ongoing. When and if medical uses are identified, the mechanism is available for making these products (purified, components of marijuana) available.