

# Marijuana as Medicine Summit

## Fiction vs. Fact

**Fiction:** *Marijuana as a medicine is “safe”.*

**Fact:** There is no substitute for the scientific approval process employed by the FDA. Marijuana is listed in the most restricted category (Schedule I) of the Controlled Substances Act (CSA). To be classified as Schedule I, a drug must have no currently accepted medical use in treatment in the United States, and must have a lack of accepted safety for use under medical supervision.

Marijuana plants contain over 400 chemicals some of which are known carcinogens. Other concerns associated with inhaling as a route of administration include imprecise dosage, and additional tissue damage related to smoke.

**Fiction:** *No current pharmaceuticals in the market are as effective as marijuana.*

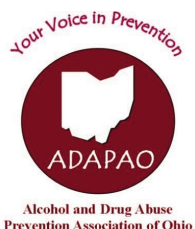
**Fact:** A synthetic version of the main psychoactive element in marijuana, delta 9 – tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), is already available in an oral synthetic medication called Marinol (dronabinol). Marinol has been approved by the FDA for treatment of anorexia associated with AIDS, and nausea and vomiting associated with cancer chemotherapy. Marinol is available by prescription in all 50 states.

**Fiction:** *Marijuana is organic, it comes from the ground. It’s good for you.*

**Fact:** Consider the poppy plant. It has proven to be medically valuable in that several medicines can be extracted from the plant. Poppy-based medications like morphine, codeine, hydrocodone and oxycodone have been identified through scientific research as products which have medicinal use in humans. The FDA has never approved smoking opium or heroin in order to benefit from these compounds. Even if there is medicinal promise in some of the chemicals in the marijuana plant, it isn’t logical to consider smoking the leaves and buds of the marijuana plant as medicine.

**Fiction:** *A compassionate person would not keep a sick person from using marijuana as a medicine.*

**Fact:** Compassionate treatment includes scientific research about recommended drug/treatment interventions. Compassionate treatment includes receiving medicines from a licensed pharmacist who can advise about dangerous drug interactions and dangers associated with other accompanying medical conditions. Compassionate treatment is protecting the safety of the sick by requiring standards for drug dosage, manufacture and packaging.



# Marijuana as Medicine Summit

## Fiction vs. Fact

“In the absence of credible data, this debate is being dominated by bad science and misinformation from people interested in using medical marijuana as a step to legalization for recreational use. Bypassing the FDA’s well-established approval process has created a mess that especially affects children and adolescents. Young people, who are clearly being targeted with medical marijuana advertising and diversion, are most vulnerable to developing marijuana addiction and suffering from its lasting effects”.

Dr. Christian Thurstone, MD,  
Assistant Professor,  
Denver Health and  
Hospital Authority;  
Child and Adolescent  
Psychiatrist, Addiction  
Psychiatrist and Assistant  
Professor of Psychiatry at  
University of Colorado

**Fiction:** *Marijuana use doesn’t hurt anyone.*

**Fact:** Confusing messages conveyed by the entertainment industry, media, marijuana as medicine proponents, and political groups promoting legalization of all marijuana use perpetuate the false notion that using marijuana is harmless. Research demonstrates impairment risks from marijuana use, including impact on attention, reflexes, reaction time, depth perception, and short-term memory loss. Marijuana use was involved in 376,000 hospital emergency room visits in America in 2009. Research also shows health risks from marijuana use, including cancer, increased heart rate, and addiction. Present addiction rates indicate that 1 out of 11 marijuana users will become addicted. That figure rises to 1 in 6 when use begins in adolescence. And rates of use continue to rise among the young as indicated by the MTF (Monitoring the Future) 2010 study, which showed a rise in daily use among 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders.

**Fiction:** *A ballot initiative is a good way to change the system.*

**Fact:** Several states have passed voter referenda (or legislative actions) making smoked and ingestible marijuana available

for a variety of medical conditions, when recommended by an approved practitioner. These measures are inconsistent with efforts to ensure that medications undergo the rigorous scientific scrutiny of the FDA (Federal Drug Administration) approval process and are proven safe and effective under the standards of the FD&C (Food, Drug and Cosmetics) Act.

**Fiction:** *Growing marijuana has no impact on the environment.*

**Fact:** Equipment used in indoor grow operations include high-intensity lamps, heaters, generators, air conditioners, dehumidifiers, water purifiers, and electrical ballasts all of which require an energy source. A recent study highlighted in *The Columbus Dispatch* in June 2011 (“Pot Growers leave Big Carbon Footprint”) indicates that indoor marijuana growers account for one percent of the nation’s total electricity consumption. While one percent might seem small, the study noted that amount of energy would power two million homes.

Additionally, a single marijuana cigarette represents two pounds of carbon dioxide emissions, which is equal to burning a 100 watt electric light bulb for 17 hours.