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Oppose

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"I have a 15, a 13, and a 9-year old, and I absolutely as a physician, as a dad, as the Surgeon General of the United States, wouldn't want them exposed to these products (marijuana), and wouldn't want them to falsely believe they're safe."

- Dr. Jerome Adams, U.S. Surgeon General

Why I Am Here

The principle reason is to prevent what happened to me from happening to others.

For the past 50 years I've struggled with mental illness, all because I became addicted to marijuana in my early 20s, which then lead to a psychotic breakdown shortly after my 25th birthday.

Words alone can't describe the horror of existing in hell 24/7, as if a bug were being forever crushed between a block of searing anxiety and a block of crushing depression, over and over and over and over ...

Worse was what I saw and felt in my brain. Thousands upon thousands of writhing and intertwining fiery tendrils, as if our sun had become home for thousands of gorgons and in the process, had gone mad.

Closing my eyes only made the horror clearer. Getting even 4-hours of sleep was a miracle. I was constantly tired, constantly exhausted, and practically catatonic.

Once while sitting in a clothing store, a person came over and touched my arm. He said I was sitting so still that he wasn't sure if I was a manikin or not.

That's how tightly I was trying to control my essence, for if I should let go for even a moment, the hell would become forever.

I was a kernel within a fetid swamp of horror. It was not me looking out my eyes. I was far back in my head, in a safe place where I'd found temporary refuge from madness.

Bright colors seemed to be reaching out to me, sinister, as if they were trying to talk. I avoided record stores, especially the "psychedelic" albums with their bright colors and distorted imagery.

Movies were far too intense to bear. Even magazines were risky, because I never knew what the next page would reveal.

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First Two Reasons Regarding How I Survived

It was because of two reasons I survived this torture:

I created a mantra that I repeated to myself over and over: "Hang on - Things will get better."

Second and probably most important was that my wife, who wasn't a smoker, stood by and supported me the entire time.

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I had no idea this could happen when I first started. The only perceived dangers in the late 60s and early 70s, were memory loss and paranoia, which was said at the time to only be temporary.

Getting "High" was the thing to do: You were "with it." You were "hip." You were "anti-establishment" and stood up to "The Man."

It was one big party.

In fact, a popular saying of the 70s was: "Sex. Drugs. Rock & Roll."

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The first time I smoked was an incredibly euphoric and beautiful experience. It was like all my worries and concerns had vanished. To say I wanted to repeat the experience is a major understatement.

My favorite activity was to listen the “Progressive Rock” music of the time. When I felt the High wearing off, I’d smoke another pipe. It was typical 3-4 daily, sometimes more.

After a while, I began to notice was that the highs weren’t as brilliant as when I started. My thoughts were that I only needed to smoke more, which I did.

In fact between my 23rd and 25th birthdays, I was High almost every waking moment.

Thing is though, instead of recapturing that initial euphoria, things just got “darker.” That’s the best way to describe it.

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Besides the music, I’d also read what were called “Underground Comics.” These were essentially self-published and could only be found in shops that sold drug paraphernalia and such. Much of the material was irreverent satire and counter culture stories, specifically written for those who were or frequently got high.

At the beginning, the stories were funny. Sometimes, they had a twist that would “zap” your mind while you were stoned.

But just like with the music, they began to take on a sinister aspect. I kept on smocking though, believing that I would eventually recapture that euphoria.

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The anxiety started in the final months leading up to the breakdown.

I smoked before going to bed, but instead of being “mellow” I’d have this growing sense of agitation. I’d eventually fall asleep, and in the morning, things would seem “normal,” such as it was.

Again, I’d never heard any warnings about this and in my youthful naivety, just kept at it.

Though I don't remember the exact day, in January of 1972 something snapped in my mind. I had smoked, but this time the agitation, rather than ebbing, consumed my being.

Everything I described earlier began at this moment.

In spite decades of therapy and medications, some of the effects still persist to this very day!

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Beginning Therapy

I was initially treated by a psychiatrist, then a psychologist.

While this helped, it took a full 10-years for the flaming apparition to depart from my brain. Same thing with the grinding, rasping anxiety.

What I was left with though, was the crushing depression that was everywhere in my life. Plus there was this paranoia, not psychotic, but a constant undercurrent of fear. Maybe this was what the anxiety turned into.

Day after day I was plagued with hopelessness and thoughts of suicide. If it weren't for my wife and my mantra, I might not have survived the ordeal.

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Two More Reasons Why I survived

A third thing that helped was that I had found a purpose in life, which was to learn to become a jazz pianist. This lead me into composition of New Jazz and Modern Chamber Music, which has been my main focus ever since. To my credit, I've composed close to 700 pieces.

I accomplished this because I became obsessed. I had to, because the intense focus drew my attention away from the horror in my mind.

Just like with the profound negative effects, I'm still this way today.

If it hadn't been jazz, it would have been something, anything, that would give relief - just like the story of the condemned soul who begged for a single drop of water to be placed on his tongue, as he languished in eternal hell-fire.

Such was the desperation.

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A forth activity was drawing and painting. Not only had I read about art therapy, but I was also inspired by the artwork on the walls of the studio of the person I studied piano with, Jessica William's.

These weren't works of beauty or exquisite technique, but rather my attempts to come to terms with what had happened to me.

In 2017, two of these were featured in an exhibit hosted by Maryland's First Lady, Yumi Hogan, in Annapolis - as part of a Mental Health Awareness project. I was also able to perform some original piano compositions during the reception.

Those drawings were also included in that years Mental Health America campaign, "Life with a Mental Illness."

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At Last, An End To Despair

Though there was gradual improvement, for over 25-years I struggled with this horrid depression, forcing myself by sheer willpower to better myself, only to sink back into despair.

This was a constant cycle.

The first real relief came in the late 1990s, when I began to take the modern antidepressant, Prozac.

Previously I'd been prescribed Elavil, but the results were these awful mood swings. When I took it, after the first couple of days the fog would be gone. After two more days I'd get so up - that it felt as if I were bursting out of my head. When I reduced the dosage, I went back to normal, then back to despair.

After two months of this, I decided to forego the medication.

The Prozac was more stable, but when the dose was increased, for some reason the depression returned.

I was then switched to Venlafaxine HCl, and now take the maximum daily dosage.

To that was added Trazodone, another antidepressant that helps with anxiety and insomnia. Again, it's the maximum daily dosage.

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The effect was that instead of being immersed in a fetid swamp, I was hovering inches above it. And though I'd still sometimes sink back into the darkness, it wasn't eternal like before. I could pull myself out. Even so, I can feel it lurking in the background.

The most noticeable long-term issue is difficulty with memory, something I've mentioned to my doctor several times. It's not that I'm senile, but that my mind has trouble focusing on a task, and tends to wander.

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How I Began To Learn What Had Happened To Me

- **THC Then and Now**

As I mentioned earlier, there was no warnings in the late 60s and early 70s of marijuana's dangers, so around 2014, I started searching for research and studies that might give information about what happened to me. As I was to find out, there were already studies and research articles concerning marijuana's many risks. For example, the American Heart Association has published a number of studies, the first in 2001 - including a 2014 study that documented a series fatal heart attacks directly related to marijuana. And the evidence keeps mounting.

However for this testimony, I will focus mainly on the Mental Health aspect.

One of the things I learned was that at the time I suffered my psychosis, THC levels in marijuana were around 3%, which by today's standards are low.

A 2019 NPR article cited a 2017 study that can be found in the National Institutes of Health "National Library of Medicine," that modern potency was now around 17% THC.

"That's an increase of more than 300% from 1995 to about 2017," says Staci Gruber, director of the Marijuana Investigations for Neuroscientific Discovery (MIND) program at

the Harvard-affiliated McLean Hospital in Belmont, Mass. 'I would say that's a considerable increase.' ... 'And some products with concentrated forms of cannabis, like hash and hash oil, can have as much as 80% to 90% THC,' she adds."

Nora Volkow, director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, states: "In general, people think, '**Oh, I don't have to worry about marijuana. It's a safe drug,**' " says "**The notion that it is completely safe drug is incorrect** when you start to address the consequences of this very high content of THC."

The article goes on to say: "That concerns scientists who study marijuana and its effects on the body, as well as **emergency room doctors who say they're starting to see more patients who come into the ER with weed-associated issues.**"

Here is a link to the NPR article -

- <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2019/05/15/723656629/highly-potent-weed-has-swept-the-market-raising-concerns-about-health-risks>

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- **Mental Health Disorders / National Library of Medicine**

This 2018 piece can also be found in the National Library of Medicine, "The adverse health effects and harms related to marijuana use: an overview review."

- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6182105/>

"Evidence of harm was reported in 62 reviews for **several mental health disorders, brain changes, cognitive outcomes, pregnancy outcomes and testicular cancer.**"

I personally have been suffering from mental health disorders.

"Harm was associated with most outcomes assessed. These results should be viewed with concern by physicians and policy-makers given the prevalence of use, the persistent reporting of a lack of recognition of marijuana as a possibly harmful substance and the emerging context of legalization for recreational use."

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- **Mental Health Disorders / Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says the following:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/health-effects.html>

< 1 > **“About 1 in 10 marijuana users will become addicted.”**

- That’s what happened to me.

< 2 > **“Marijuana use directly affects the brain — specifically the parts of the brain responsible for memory, learning, attention, decision making, coordination, emotions, and reaction time.”**

- I suffer from memory and attention problems.

< 3 > **“Marijuana use, especially frequent (daily or near daily) use and use in high doses, can cause *disorientation*, and sometimes cause *unpleasant thoughts* or *feelings of anxiety and paranoia*.”**

*“Marijuana users are significantly more likely than nonusers to develop **temporary psychosis** (not knowing what is real, **hallucinations and paranoia**) and **long-lasting mental disorders**, including schizophrenia (a type of mental illness where people might see or hear things that aren’t really there).”*

*“Marijuana use has also been linked to **depression and anxiety, and suicide** among teens. However, it is not known whether this is a causal relationship or simply an association.”*

- All this happened to me as well.

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- **Mental Health Disorders / American Journal of Psychiatry**

This 2018 study was published in Psychology Today, “Acute Marijuana-Induced Psychosis May Predict Future Illness.”

“For this study, the investigators reviewed the long-term outcomes of all persons who received a diagnosis of substance-induced psychosis between 1994 and 2014 and had no prior diagnosis of a psychotic illness — a group of over 6,700 people.”

“The most dramatic increases by far occurred in those who exhibited psychotic symptoms following marijuana use.”

*“Over a twenty-year follow-up period, about 41 percent of those who had a **psychotic reaction to marijuana** developed schizophrenia, and 47 percent developed either schizophrenia or bipolar disorder.”*

*“These results demonstrate that those who are diagnosed with substance-induced psychotic symptoms, **especially after marijuana use**, are at high risk for eventually developing a chronic psychotic illness.”*

- This helps explain what I went through.

https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/demystifying-psychiatry/201801/acute-marijuana-induced-psychosis-may-predict-future-illness?fbclid=IwAR0S_KfDcDW_hTWvIx1PdDAtbac8b1uXIUAqN1Sk633_9apInF7XTOzANLO

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- **Mental Health Disorders / NBC News: National Institute on Drug Abuse, Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, American Journal of Psychiatry**

In 2018, NBC News ran this feature: “Mental Health - Chronic pot use may have serious effects on the brain, experts say”

<https://www.nbcnews.com/health/mental-health/chronic-pot-use-may-have-serious-effects-brain-experts-say-n924441?fbclid=IwAR3WcOwi7fn4pD9dKAaLqM0QiCAWTLaWPwU6ULw0UHJD9FkrY8HXEFHUYTU>

“After four years of heavy use, Warner noticed that his short-term memory was starting to fray. He avoided talking to people, and **festering feelings of anxiety and depression** grew. He tried to mask them with weed, deepening his dependency.”

“Studies have shown that **chronic marijuana use affects the same brain structures that are involved with addiction**. The National Institute on Drug Abuse suggests that 30 percent of those who use marijuana may have some degree of “marijuana use disorder.”

“Marijuana use disorders are often associated with dependence — in which a person feels withdrawal symptoms when not taking the drug. Frequent users report irritability, mood and sleep difficulties, decreased appetite, cravings, restlessness and physical discomfort ... Marijuana dependence occurs when the brain adapts to large amounts of the drug, **requiring more and more to create the desired euphoric effect.**”

“Researchers estimate that **4 million people in the United States met the criteria for marijuana use disorder** in 2015, but only 138,000 of them voluntarily sought treatment.”

“A Canadian study published in the Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry in 2017 showed a **substantial increase in ‘psychotic-like experiences’ in teenage users**. The study also reported adverse effects on **cognitive development and increased symptoms of depression.**”

<https://acamh.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/jcpp.12765?systemMessage=Wiley+Online+Library+will+be+down+on+Wednesday+05th+July+starting+at+17.00+>

[EDT+%2F+22%3A00+BST+%2F+02%3A30+IST+%2F+05.00+SGT+%286th+July%29+for+up+to+1+hour+due+to+essential+maintenance+](#))

“Other studies show that chronic use may even **interfere with normal development of the adolescent brain.**” (American Journal of Psychiatry - <https://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/doi/10.1176/appi.ajp.2018.18020202>)

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- **Mental Health Disorders / National Institute on Drug Abuse**
Marijuana Research Report

In 2020, The National Institute on Drug Abuse published its revised “Marijuana Research Report. “ <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/marijuana/what-are-marijuanas-long-term-effects-brain>

“Several studies, including two large longitudinal studies, suggest that **marijuana use can cause functional impairment in cognitive abilities** but that the degree and/or duration of the impairment depends on the age when a person began using and how much and how long he or she used.”

“Among nearly 4,000 young adults in the Coronary Artery Risk Development in Young Adults study tracked over a 25-year period until mid-adulthood, cumulative lifetime exposure to **marijuana was associated with lower scores on a test of verbal memory ... The effect was sizeable and significant ...**”

“Some studies have also **linked marijuana use to declines in IQ**, especially when use starts in adolescence and leads to persistent cannabis use disorder into adulthood.”

“A large longitudinal study in New Zealand found that persistent marijuana use disorder with frequent use starting in adolescence was **associated with a loss of an average of 6 or up to 8 IQ points** measured in mid-adulthood. Those who used marijuana heavily as teenagers and quit using as adults **did not recover the lost IQ points.**”

“Memory impairment from marijuana use occurs because **THC alters how the hippocampus, a brain area responsible for memory formation, processes information** ... As people age, they lose neurons in the hippocampus, which decreases their ability to learn new information. **Chronic THC exposure may hasten age-related loss of hippocampal neurons.**”

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- **Mental Health Disorders / Dr. Steven Simerville, St. Mary-Corwin Hospital Pueblo Physicians Code Red**

The adverse effects marijuana on the **developing brains of human embryos** is the subject of this 2014 testimony by Dr. Steven Simerville, a pediatrician who at the time was Medical Director of the Nursery at St. Mary-Corwin Hospital in Pueblo, Colorado.

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=K4bcl9Fqfls&t=174s>

“About 7-10% of our babies in a given month test positive for exposure to THC.”

“In the 70s when they first started looking at what does post natal THC mean, they looked at mothers who exposed their babies to marijuana. That marijuana was 2.5% THC. Our current marijuana is 15%.”

*“So it’s a **7-fold increase in the concentration of THC that our babies are being exposed to.**”*

*“**But back then, in the 70s, we knew that if a baby was exposed prenatally to marijuana, they would see decreased school performance, they would have difficulties in spatial reasoning, they would have difficulties in problem solving, difficulties in short-term memory, and they would be less likely to graduate from high school, and they would suffer from what we call academic underperformance, meaning they should have more potential but don’t live up to it.**”*

“That was with the 1970s THC. We don’t know what it means now.”

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That was in 2014. The following report from the National Institutes of Health, National Library of Medicine, came out in 2019:

- **“Neonate Death Due to Marijuana Toxicity to the Liver and Adrenals”**
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31838485/>

*“We report a **death of an 11-day-old white female neonate due to acute marijuana toxicity. She died of extensive necrosis and hemorrhage of the liver and adrenals due to maternal use of marijuana.**”*

“This case is unique in that other possible causes of death can be eliminated. With growing use of marijuana by pregnant women and increases in newborn drug screening of umbilical cord homogenate, more cases of neonatal death due to acute marijuana toxicity could be discovered.”

- **Mental Health Association of Maryland**

Can Marijuana Cause Mental Illnesses?

<https://www.mhamd.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Risky-Business-Marijuana-w%EF%80%A2-MHAMD-logo.pdf>

*“Marijuana may increase the **risk of developing psychotic disorders like schizophrenia**. It can also worsen symptoms in people who already have psychosis.”*

*“**Marijuana use during adolescence can have lasting effects**, including changes to the reward system in the brain and **trouble with thinking and remembering**.”*

*“Marijuana use can cause symptoms of **mental health problems like psychosis (hallucinations), anxiety (panic attacks), depression, and sleep disorders**, but these symptoms generally fade after the effect of the drug has worn off.”*

“People may get “too high” by using a strain of marijuana that is stronger than they thought it would be, by using too much, or by consuming it in different ways. Smoking marijuana usually takes effect quickly (a matter of minutes), while consuming edibles usually takes longer (a matter of hours) for an individual to feel the effects, and they may end up consuming too much because they “don’t feel it” at first.”

*“Adults who have been **diagnosed with marijuana (cannabis) use disorder have high rates of mental health disorders including anxiety, depression, PTSD, and ADHD**. It is hard to know whether the marijuana use disorder or the mental health disorder appeared first, since many people use drugs to self-medicate.”*

I Was Not Unique

In my search about marijuana’s dangers, I came across a number of parent based organizations, who were sharing submitted stories concerning the suffering and grief families had endured, because of losing a child due to marijuana addiction.

These are just three.

- **Johnny’s Ambassadors** - <https://johnnysambassadors.org/>

“Johnny’s Ambassadors is a non-partisan, non-profit, grass-roots alliance of

individuals and organizations around the globe concerned about the **harms of youth marijuana use**. We are parents, coalitions, impacted family members, healthcare professionals, teachers, and nonprofits who seek to reduce youth marijuana use through education, prevention, and awareness. **We use evidence-based, scientific research and experts to teach the impacts of today's high-THC marijuana on youth mental illness and suicide ideation**. Our allied organizations come together to save the lives of our youth, and Johnny's Ambassadors actively promotes their activities.

- **Moms Strong** - <https://momsstrong.org/>

*"We are a group of Moms who have seen marijuana **severely damage our teenage and young adult children**. While pot advocates promote stories of how marijuana is a safe, natural and fun activity, **we have instead witnessed our children develop devastating mental health issues after using it. We have observed the side effects of anxiety, panic attacks, paranoia, depression and psychosis, and have even seen a final result of suicide**. We have watched how these changes have occurred in some as a sudden psychotic break and in others gradually over a long period of addiction."*

- **Parents Opposed To Pot** - <https://poppot.org/>

*"Parents Opposed to Pot bursts the "bubble of the marijuana hype" and **counters the false narrative that marijuana is harmless**. We know that no amount of marijuana, especially in its current high-THC forms, can be proven safe ... **Using current research and testimony**, we strive to prevent youth marijuana use by educating the parents."*

Besides parents stories, there are links to testimony from mental health experts, doctors, and concerned citizens who are using education as a way to halt the false rumors of marijuana being harmless.

*"Marc Brawner says ever since Colorado legalized marijuana in 2012, he's had too many **employees coming in high**. He's had to fire too many people and that factored into his decision to move to North Myrtle Beach, S.C."*

- <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2015/04/23/props-company-moves/26256079/>

*"Whenever you listen to or read dialog from the pro-marijuana crowd, they say that legalizing marijuana will make the black market go away ... Rather, **legalizing marijuana invites criminal organizations into your state** and allows them to grow pot illegally ... I am the owner of a summer home in rural Colorado with beautiful mountain views. In the midst of this beauty, a Chinese group purchased a ten-acre parcel with a house near my home. Within a year, they had cleared a section of the indigenous vegetation, which is so important to the survival of the local wildlife, and*

*illegally grew thousands of marijuana plants ... In fact, this is when I first **decided to purchase a firearm for protection.*** - <https://poppot.org/2021/02/01/legalization-invites-black-market-lawlessness-into-state/#more-17400>

- **U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams has also issued warnings**

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=sxl7S9c0Vfg&t=14s>

“U.S. Surgeon General sounds the alarm for pregnant women and adolescents”

“No amount of marijuana use during **pregnancy**, or **adolescence**, is safe.”

“**This (warning) is being driven by the science**, and the most important thing I want people to know, is that marijuana potency has increased three-fold over the past several decades, and that’s just the plant.”

“It’s a fundamentally different product that increases the dangers and the risks to young people and pregnant women.”

“What we are talking here now is **science and data.**”

“Youth in those states (that have legalized recreational marijuana) think it’s more safe, when **the reality is that’s it’s less safe**, and that can cause **cognition problems, learning attention and memory**. We’re seeing **emergency department admissions for psychosis and poisonings** go up for adolescents.”

“Here’s one of the scariest things that people don’t know. As the THC content goes up, **the danger of addiction** goes up. **1 out of 5 adolescents who use marijuana will become addicted to the substance.** We know that **if you use one substance, you’re likely to use other substances.**”

“**My own brother is in prison** due to crimes he committed to support his addiction. **His first drug was marijuana.**”

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Good News

When I started gathering research, testimonies and news stories about marijuana, there was so much information that I started a site to store the data. <https://georgespicka.weebly.com/marijuana-links.html>

I organized these into 9 categories, based on what I felt was most important, the first being **KIDS and Children**.

At this writing I have 239 links.

I even have a **Good News** category that considers Medical Marijuana

- **FDA and Cannabis**

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/public-health-focus/fda-and-cannabis-research-and-drug-approval-process>

*“To date, the FDA has not approved a marketing application for cannabis for the treatment of any disease or condition. **The agency has, however, approved one cannabis-derived drug product: Epidiolex (cannabidiol), and three synthetic cannabis-related drug products: Marinol (dronabinol), Syndros (dronabinol), and Cesamet (nabilone).** These approved drug products are **only available with a prescription from a licensed healthcare provider.** Importantly, the FDA has not approved any other cannabis, cannabis-derived, or cannabidiol (CBD) products currently available on the market.”*

*“FDA has approved **Epidiolex** ... for the treatment of seizures associated with Lennox-Gastaut syndrome or Dravet syndrome ... **That means FDA has concluded that this particular drug product is safe and effective for its intended use.**”*

*“The agency also has approved **Marinol** and **Syndros** ... for **nausea associated with cancer chemotherapy** and for the **treatment of anorexia associated with weight loss in AIDS patients.**”*

*Another FDA-approved drug, **Cesamet** ... like dronabinol-containing products, is **indicated for nausea associated with cancer chemotherapy.***

*“FDA is aware that unapproved cannabis and/or unapproved cannabis-derived products are being used to treat a number of medical conditions ... However, the use of unapproved cannabis and cannabis-derived products can have **unpredictable and unintended consequences, including serious safety risks.**”*

*“**FDA supports sound, scientifically-based research** into the medicinal uses of drug products containing cannabis or cannabis-derived compounds and will continue to work with companies interested in bringing safe, effective, and quality products to market.”*

The Maryland Connection

1987 Amtrak Disaster

Some may be too young to remember, but in January of 1987, 16-people were killed in an Amtrak disaster in Chase, Maryland, that was directly related to marijuana.

- **NTSB Accident Report.** *"The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of this accident was the failure, as a result of **impairment from marijuana**, of the engineer of Conrail train ENS-121 to stop his train in compliance with home signal 1N before it fouled track 2 at Gunpow ..."*
<https://www.nts.gov/investigations/AccidentReports/Pages/RAR8801.aspx>
- **George Mason University / Marijuana Fact sheet** - *"Marijuana can alter one's sense of time and **impair the ability to perform tasks that require concentration** ... Experiments have shown that **marijuana affects a wide range of skills needed for safe driving.**"* - <http://www.gmu.edu/resources/facstaff/facultyfacts/1-2/grass.html>
- **WIKIPEDIA** - *"At the time, the wreck was the deadliest in Amtrak's history ... Gates and his brakeman, Edward "Butch" Cromwell, were also **smoking a marijuana cigarette**. Cromwell was responsible for calling out the signals if Gates missed them, but failed to do so."* - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1987_Maryland_train_collision

Video of the tragedy can be seen at this link -

- **Rescue 911/ Amtrak 1987** - <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=BoI7q-78muY>

"I was overwhelmed by the magnitude of destruction to the train. I've never seen a train derailment of that magnitude before." - Dennis Dembeck, EMT

"The locomotive that was on fire, it was like somebody had taken a box of train parts, and sprinkled them all over. There were pieces no bigger than 2 or 3 feet."

- Bob Hausman, Fire Captain

"I remember seeing a rescue worker pick up somebody's head off the track, and they just had him by the hair. It was this charred, charred skull of a skeleton that was left."

- Witness

- **Baltimore Magazine** - <https://www.baltimoremagazine.com/section/community/special-report-on-the-crash-of-amtrak-colonial-94/>

*"Waskevitz, the first emergency worker on the scene, makes his way to the wreckage ... One victim is buried under the seats. **He checks for a pulse in her neck and feels***

none. He digs farther, snaking along on his hands and knees, on his stomach, stashing debris behind him like a mole. **He comes to another victim, her neck apparently broken. She is also dead.**”

“Nearby, one woman is extricated alive and flown to the trauma unit, where **her legs are amputated. She lingers for eight days before dying.**”

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Then there’s the issue of stoned parents, who while high forget about potential consequences marijuana can have on their children.

- **Maryland Children Get Sick** - <http://www.poppot.org/2018/01/24/maryland-children-get-sick-big-marijuana-pushes-its-agenda/>

“**Five schoolchildren were hospitalized** in southern Maryland after a middle school student brought and shared marijuana-laced food to school. Following an investigation, the St. Mary’s County sheriff has **charged a father from Great Mills with reckless endangerment.**”

“The man’s daughter and four other students **had a reaction to marijuana laced gummy bears ... All five students reported feeling ill**, and they were taken to the hospital in Leonardtown.”

Link to original story - https://www.somdnews.com/enterprise/crime_and_courts/father-charged-in-school-pot-candy-probe/article_5cc2c3b7-86c4-5509-9bf7-2617842c1e12.html

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The problem with kids and stoned parents is not limited to Maryland

- **A 9-Year-Old Accidentally Shared Her Grandpa’s Marijuana Gummies With Her Fifth-Grade Class** -

Time Magazine - <https://time.com/5114582/thc-edibles-new-mexico/?fbclid=IwAR2aGA0gWnSPup3N1Q3u-XRhKilArcpkAv-HXT0fu5zOYNbXknF7sPbxSyo>

“A 9-year-old girl came to school with what looked like typical gummy candies, but were actually edibles **laced with THC, one of the psychoactive chemicals found in cannabis** ... The candies reportedly belonged to the student’s grandfather.”

*“The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment argued that **edibles put young children at risk** of accidental poisoning, and noted that **calls to poison control centers and visits to Colorado pediatric hospitals related to marijuana poisoning increased** ... “These findings suggest that greater availability of marijuana, particularly in edible products, can **increase risks to young children.**”*

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This is a 2020 NBC News Report - <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/two-children-hospitalized-after-eating-thc-candy-food-bank-n1176721>

- **At least two children are hospitalized after eating THC candy**

*“An 11-year-old and a 5-year-old were **taken to a hospital** Friday night after consuming “Medicated Nerds Rope” candy.”*

*“**We are absolutely horrified** that this product went out to any of our partner agencies.’ Ginette Bott, Utah Food Bank president and CEO.”*

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has even reported about fatal consequences of marijuana edibles.

- **Death Following Ingestion of an Edible Marijuana Product**

<http://www.cdc.gov/Mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6428a6.htm>

*“In March 2014, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) learned of the **death of a man aged 19 years after consuming an edible marijuana product.***

*“ ... he reportedly exhibited **erratic speech and hostile behaviors.** Approximately 3.5 hours after initial ingestion, and 2.5 hours after consuming the remainder of the cookie, he **jumped off a fourth floor balcony** and died from trauma.”*

*“The autopsy, performed 29 hours after time of death, **found marijuana intoxication as a chief contributing factor.**”*

*“This case illustrates a **potential danger associated with recreational edible marijuana** use. Some studies have suggested an **association between cannabis and psychological disturbances.**”*

*“Consuming a large dose of THC can result in a higher THC concentration, greater intoxication, and an **increased risk for adverse psychological effects.**”*

But it's more than stoned parents, kids, and marijuana edibles - A persistent piece of misinformation that's been deliberately spread, is that it's safe to smoke marijuana and drive.

- **'Miracle kid' has face rebuilt** - https://www.syracuse.com/crime/2015/06/4-year-old-miracle-kid-has-face-rebuilt-after-near-fatal-crash-caused-by-father.html#incart_story_package

“When a 4-year-old girl's face and skull were shattered to pieces in a crash on the State Thruway, doctors mended the bones together with sugar-based compounds.”

*“Peyton Bean was airlifted by Mercy Flight from the Sept. 25, 2014, crash in Ontario County to Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester, where **she spent 11 days on life support in an induced coma and five more days recovering.** She was admitted as a level one trauma patient, the most serious.”*

*“**Peyton suffered 14 different injuries** - some of which are listed as ‘multiple fractures’ ... she was in the back passenger's seat as her father drove ... Her father, Bryan Tanner, 25, **was smoking marijuana in the car before he lost control and hit a tree.**”*

-
- **3 killed, including 2 kids, in 5 vehicle crash**

ABC News

- <https://abc7news.com/pot-crash-marijuana-cannabis-fremont-car/3481312/>

“The Alameda County Coroner's office identified two victims of the fatal I-880 crash in Fremont Tuesday night. They are 14-year-old Christy Limas and 9-year-old Brooke Limas.”

*“Dang Nguyen Hai Tran, 21, was driving a Toyota Camry involved in the crash and was **arrested for suspicion of driving under the influence of marijuana.**”*

*“**Driving under the influence, whether it's alcohol or drugs, the outcome is the same. It's dangerous. It kills people,**” said CHP Officer Manuel Leal.*

AAA has been talking about the link between marijuana and fatal crashes for years

- **Fatal Crashes Involving Drivers Who Test Positive for Marijuana Increase After State Legalizes Drug**

<https://newsroom.aaa.com/2020/01/fatal-crashes-involving-drivers-who-test-positive-for-marijuana-increase-after-state-legalizes-drug/>

“A concerning number of Washington state drivers involved in fatal crashes are testing positive for recent use of marijuana, according to new research from the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.”

“The share of drivers who, after a fatal crash, tested positive for active THC – the drug’s main psychoactive ingredient – has doubled since the state legalized marijuana.”

“This study enabled us to review a full 10-years’ worth of data about the potential impact of marijuana on driving safety – and it raises significant concerns.”

*“Marijuana use can **inhibit concentration, slow reaction times and cloud judgment**. Its effects vary by individual, but a number of studies have concluded that **marijuana use impairs the ability to drive safely**. Previous research suggests that users who drive high are up to twice as likely to be involved in a crash.”*

The Auto Insurance Industry is talking about this too.

- **First States to Legalize Marijuana See Rise in Car Insurance Claims, Research Shows** <https://www.insurancejournal.com/magazines/mag-features/2019/01/07/513762.htm>

*“Crashes are up by as much as six percent in **Colorado, Nevada, Oregon and Washington**, compared with neighboring states that haven’t legalized marijuana for recreational use, according to research from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) and Highway Loss Data Institute (HLDI).”*

“The new IIHS-HLDI research on marijuana and crashes indicates that legalizing marijuana for all uses is having a negative impact on the safety of our roads ... States exploring legalizing marijuana should consider this effect on highway safety.”

- **Report finds increase in car insurance rate; Marijuana, distracted driving blamed** <https://www.wcvb.com/article/report-finds-increase-in-car-insurance-rate-marijuana-distracted-driving-blamed/26946952#>

*“Another factor driving Boston’s rise in car insurance premiums could be the **legalization of marijuana**, say experts. Research from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and Highway Loss Data Institute found that **car crashes increase in states that legalize retail sales of marijuana** ... ‘States exploring legalizing marijuana should consider this effect on highway safety,’ IIHS-HLDI President David Harkey.”*

Drug & Gang Violence

Besides children being poisoned and killed in car accidents, Maryland will have to deal with organized crime.

MS-13, one of the most violent drug gangs, first got into the United States as illegal immigrants through California.

They’ve been in or area ever since Washington, D.C. legalized recreational marijuana.

- **Montgomery homicide victim was ambushed by MS-13, according to court documents**

*“Know the connection between **marijuana use and gang violence**. This murder happened in Wheaton, MD, Montgomery County. “Detectives also said that on the night before the killing, at least **three of the suspects gathered together, smoked marijuana and discussed the ambush.**”*

https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/montgomery-homicide-victim-was-ambushed-by-ms-13-according-to-court-documents/2020/06/11/786d2dd0-abad-11ea-a9d9-a81c1a491c52_story.html?fbclid=IwAR3mg1xuDMjOApRRHdIN4h1tynBbzjgSiHOBuymebYe7yc1EoilN04-VnfE

- **ICE: Undocumented immigrant, deported twice before, caught raping woman under stairwell**

*"According to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Lopez-Gonzalez is a Salvadoran national believed to be associated with **MS-13** ..."*

<https://wjla.com/news/local/ice-undocumented-immigrant-deported-twice-before-caught-raping-woman-under-stairwell>

- **Police say Towson killing is linked to MS-13.**

*"MS-13 Came to our region **after Washington DC legalized recreational marijuana** ..."*

<https://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/baltimore-county/bs-md-co-ms13-response-20190906-se2u7lzkvrgexewsyzo7lnkade-story.html>

- **Police: Group of MS-13 members beat Md. man with bat in woods for refusing to join gang**

*"During their meal, two men sat down at the table and **invited the victim to smoke marijuana with them.** The victim declined."*

<https://wjla.com/news/local/ms-13-members-beat-md-man-with-bat-in-woods>

- **Police: MS-13 members in Maryland stab man more than 100 times and decapitate him**

*"As many as 10 members of the MS-13 street gang lured a man into a park in Wheaton, Md., spoke with one another over walkie-talkies as he arrived, **stabbed him more than 100 times, decapitated him** and then **cut out his heart ...**"*

https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/police-ms-13-members-in-maryland-stab-man-more-than-100-times-and-decapitate-him/2017/11/22/0cba9760-cf7e-11e7-a1a3-0d1e45a6de3d_story.html

- **3 teens charged in MS-13 killing of 14-year-old girl used machete, baseball bat, police say**

*"Three Maryland teenagers have been charged as adults in the **brutal slaying of a 14-year-old girl** who police said may have planned to go to authorities about a crime she and the suspects committed last month."*

<https://www.boston25news.com/news/trending-now/3-teens-charged-in-ms13-killing-of-14-year-old-girl-used-machete-baseball-bat-police-say/950156117/>

Environmental Impact

Another thing with drug gangs is that once marijuana is legalized, they come in and start illegal grows. This because they can sell cheaper on the street than government supervised outlets.

They use all kinds of pesticides, some illegal, and that's what people are smoking. They cut down whole areas with no concern about environmental impact.

Because marijuana is a water-intensive plant, they divert large quantities of water, when then flows back into streams and rivers loaded with these pesticides.

- **The newest threat to California's redwoods - The Washington Post**

www.washingtonpost.com/news/made-by-history/wp/2018/04/15/the-newest-threat-to-californias-redwoods-isnt-what-you-d-think/

*“**Marijuana cultivation** subjects North Coast forests to a barrage of **environmental assaults: soil erosion, heavy pesticide use, stream diversion, irresponsible grading and land clearing, all of which threaten to lay waste to the redwoods.**”*

*“... **marijuana interests** are positioning themselves to shape regulations that **protect the industry, not the environment.**”*

- **A Growing Problem on our Public Lands**

https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=5n1EY_Nutm4

(This is a Ted Talk about illegal marijuana cultivation's deadly effect on animals, via rodenticides. Though focused on the Pacific fisher, Mourad Gabriel MS, PhD - explains the threat to endangered species, game animals, and people living downstream - and of course those who smoke the plant.)

SUMMARY

In the 6-years since I began gathering research data and other information concerning marijuana's dangers, I've acquired far more information than I expected. I thought there would be far less.

This is in large part due in part to another persistent rumor, that because marijuana is still a Schedule 1 drug, researchers can't test it. This is one of the justifications to have it rescheduled, which will also have the effect of making it easier to be legalized for recreational use. However, the FDA has made it clear that it has plenty of marijuana available for purposes of research.

What I've collected I've organized into the following categories:

KIDS & Children

Accidents

Violence

Mental Health

Physical Health

Pregnancy

Environmental

Good News

Concerned Organizations

Misc.

Personally, I support ongoing scientific research for medical applications that are based on sound scientific investigations, and not rumors and anecdotal evidence.

I accept the fact that people are going to use. It is their decision, and they have to be responsible for the outcomes as the result of those decisions.

What does bother me though, is this persistent myth, that marijuana is harmless.

As you can see, not only do I base my stance on my own experience, but also on the research and evidence I've discovered.

What I've shared here is only a small portion of what I've uncovered. There's so much data out there about marijuana's dangers, that I can't keep up with it.

Any who claim there is no danger, is either uninformed, or being willfully ignorant, and this is because of the overt misinformation being spread by agenda driven organizations like NORML and Marijuana Policy Project.

You've seen all the information about marijuana's dangers that I've shared from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the FDA, The U.S. Surgeon General, and the National Institutes of Health, National Library of Medicine.

To a healthy and open mind, there is no confusion as to what is going on.

Intellectual Dishonesty

The Judiciary Committee is challenged with the task of judging which testimony is honest and based on genuine scientific research, and what is based on propaganda and misinformation spread by the marijuana industry and its lobbyists.

One could easily assume that the job would be easy, and that the findings of the health and medical experts I've cited, along with the firsthand testimony of aggrieved parents, would be accepted as being honest.

However for years, the marijuana industry and its lobbyists have been denigrating the efforts of genuine research and those who've suffered, sometimes with direct personal attacks.

Let me show you what I mean.

1) Besides being a prolific composer and a jazz pianist, I'm also Associate Curator of Paleontology for the Natural History Society of Maryland.

In that capacity, I keep up with the ongoing research regarding climate and extinction events, which at times are related.

There is sometimes disagreements between groups of researchers. That's not unusual in science.

Rather than denigrating those one disagrees with, real researchers either go back to work and find additional evidence that supports their claims, or else work to find errors (which sometimes do occur).

This is the difference between a mature discipline, and one that has to resort to putting down others, no matter how truthful their findings are, to make their case sound believable.

2) Several years ago, after testifying about a series of fatal heart attacks directly linked to marijuana, I had a marijuana lobbyist come up to me, saying that I needed to learn my “facts.”

My response was to say that all I deal is in facts, and offered him a copy of my written testimony, saying that it had nearly two-dozen links to research about marijuana’s risks.

What he did was to turn around and walk back into the hearing room. It wasn’t that he didn’t know, he didn’t want to know.

I pondered his statement about “facts.” I had quoted information from the American Heart Association, which is our nation’s highest authority on heart disease. There are no other “facts!”

3) Then I discovered NORML’s “Medical Research Library.” A quick read clearly shows that it’s mostly based on assumptions, misinformation, and distortions of fact.

In this library is the document,

- **The NORML Truth Report** <https://norml.org/marijuana/library/truth-report/>

This report opens with the statement, **“Your Government Is Lying To You (Again) About Marijuana”**

That would include the National Institutes of Health, the U.S. Surgeon General, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the FDA - for starters.

The National Library of Medicine, the largest of it’s kind in the world, is housed in the National Institutes of Health, but according to NORML, it’s nothing but lies.

This is how NORML indoctrinates its supporters into believing marijuana is harmless, by convincing them they’re being lied to

It’s why teenagers, in spite of all the warnings, smoke, get addicted, develop mental health problems, and sometimes in desperation take there own lives.

What I’ve said about teens and mental health, and driving, and gangs, and the environment is no secret. It’s been covered in all forms of major media.

Yet never once does NORML talk about these overt dangers. It’s all denial and misdirection as to what’s factually occurring.

Because to admit to what what the real scientific evidence shows, is to bring down their facade.

4) Recent Medical Marijuana Research <https://norml.org/marijuana/library/recent-medical-marijuana-research>

The FDA has only approved four medications that involve marijuana

This NORML document presents a list of 24 treatments that involve marijuana.

I'm sure that as scientific research continues, more uses will be found. However, as with many of NORML's statements, this document is misleading.

For example, they list Rheumatoid Arthritis, but I checked around, and found this from the Rheumatology Network:

*“Many rheumatology patients may seek cannabinoids to relieve pain, but **solid evidence for effectiveness is lacking ...**”*

*“The groundswell of advocacy driving the use of medicinal herbal cannabis is **contrary to medical opinion ...** “*

*“Contrary to common belief, **herbal cannabis is not an innocuous substance, either for short- or long-term use, and its effects undermine the primary goals for treatment of rheumatic pain, namely reduction of symptoms and maintenance of function.**”*

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5) Another concern is this statement further down in the document:

“ ... scientists are investigating cannabinoids' capacity to moderate autoimmune disorders such as [multiple sclerosis](#), [rheumatoid arthritis](#), and [inflammatory bowel disease](#), as well as their role in the treatment of neurological disorders such as [Alzheimer's disease](#) and [amyotrophic lateral sclerosis](#) (a.k.a. Lou Gehrig's disease).

When you click these reference links, rather than being taken to medical research, you're instead taken to another page in NORML's "Medical Library," which contains even more fraudulent information rather than real scientific proof.

NORML uses fraudulent data to support fraudulent claims.

When NORML's being interviewed and claims that "science" supports their position, they are lying.

In the name of this nation's health and especially its youth, this deception must stop. Now.

Is not fraudulent testimony the crime of perjury? At the very least it's unethical, so why do we let it persist?

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6) Then there's the letter from Marijuana Policy Project's Director, Steve Hawkins.

- **Obstruction and lies is all they've got - let's disarm the prohibitionists today** <https://ashevilleprogressive.com/site/uncategorized/24762/>

Not only does he directly attack Kevin Sabat, head of "Smart Approaches to Marijuana," he accuses SAM and the "Prohibitionists" of spreading misinformation, creating confusion, and slowing down "progress."

A "Prohibitionist" is anyone who dares challenge the assumption that marijuana is harmless. That includes me, all those grieving parents, all the government health organizations I've mentioned, plus organizations like the American Heart Association, the American Lung Association, American Medical Association, American Psychiatric Association, and the list just goes on.

What we are witnessing is the sacrifice of our nation's health for the sake of profit for the marijuana industry.

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I can't help but be reminded of attorney Joseph Welch's statement at the 1954 Army-McCarthy Hearings, "Until this moment ... I think I never really gauged your cruelty or your recklessness. Have you no sense of decency? At long last, have you left no sense of decency?"

Sincerely,

George F. Spicka

