



AMERICAN
BOTANICAL
COUNCIL

Post Office Box 144345
Austin, Texas 78714-4345
Phone 512/926-4900
Fax 512/926-2345
Email: abc@herbalgram.org
www.herbalgram.org

Mark Blumenthal
Editor

Wayne Silverman, PhD
Underwriting Coordinator

Betsy Levy
Densie Webb, PhD
Leela Devi, MSN, RN
Risa Schulman, PhD
Susie Epstein
Ginger Webb
Summary Writers

Karen Newton
Database Manager

Kara Dinda, MS
Susan McFarland
Co-coordinators

Dawnelle Malone
Research Assistant

The American Botanical Council provides this summary and the enclosed article as an educational service. By providing this article, ABC does not warrant that the data is accurate and correct, nor does distribution of the enclosed article constitute any endorsement of the information contained or of the views of the authors.

ABC does not authorize the copying or use of the original articles. Reproduction of the summaries is allowed on a limited basis for students, colleagues, employees and/or customers. Other uses and distribution require prior approval.

HERBCLIPTM

FILE: · Marijuana (*Cannabis sativa*)

DATE: July 30, 1999

HC 051196

RE: **Institute of Medicine Release Report on Medical Marijuana**

Kalb, Claudia. No Green Light Yet. *Newsweek*, March 29, 1999, pg. 35.

This author succinctly reviews the fall out from the release of the Institute of Medicine's new marijuana study. The study, commissioned by federal drug czar Barry McCaffrey, does little to resolve the impasse between medical marijuana advocates and federal anti-drug stalwarts, because it officially acknowledges marijuana's potential medical applications but calls the traditional "drug delivery system" of smoking the whole herb "toxic."

Operators of medical marijuana clinics, legal at the state level in California but illegal under federal anti-drug law, are breathing easier now that the study vindicates certain applications of the herb. On the other hand, sources say that if the IOM study had given blanket approval to medical marijuana, McCaffrey would have supported downgrading the drug from its Schedule I status (high abuse potential, no medicinal value) to Schedule II (available by prescription). McCaffrey now says that based on the study, "I think what we will aggressively support is continued research."

The study supports continued development of synthetic cannabinoid (some of the active compounds in marijuana) compounds; little is said about using purified marijuana extracts, perhaps because synthetic production is easier to control and drug companies have an incentive to work on developing new delivery systems if they invest in drug development. Smoking the herb, despite its supposed toxicity, is relatively inexpensive, offers immediate delivery and is easily titratable for patients, many of whom find the synthetic cannabinoids in pill form to deliver a long-delayed but overly potent dose. An inhaler is being developed by Unimed Pharmaceuticals, manufacturers of Marinol[®], the only synthetic cannabinoid currently on the market, but product approval is still years away.

Harvard doctor and medical marijuana crusader Lester Grinspoon, M.D. calls the study's findings a "political compromise," and warns that their emphasis on pharmaceutical research will delay treatment and may be "wholly unrealistic." —*Betsy Levy*

The American Botanical Council has not been unable to secure permission for the original article to be enclosed with this HerbClip memo.

Enclosure: none

Bin #160