

VICS Newsletter



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News and information on medical cannabis

Medical Cannabis News:

Canada -

Health Canada Suspends Medical Cannabis Research Funding

In 1999, Health Canada created the Medical Marijuana Research Program (MMRP) with a total research project budget of \$7.5 million over five years. The MMRP ends March 31st, 2006.

As of August 25, 2004, the CIHR website stated that funding for the medical marijuana research program has been suspended until further notice. Apparently only the Request for Applications process has been temporarily suspended, while "all previously announced clinical research studies that have been approved for funding under the MMRP will continue without interruption."

Present applications would not be able to receive approval and finish their study before the 2006 deadline, even though HC claims it is pursuing funding for Phase II. One wonders how much more the program will get when they've only spent a little over \$2 million of the original budget (~30%) on research so far.

VICS 2004 AGM - Standing Room Only

Standing room only at the fourth VICS Annual General Meeting translated into over 40 members, plus their friends and family, jamming into our new, more spacious digs to hear the news of the past year and spend time with each other.

The biggest news still remains the May 27 raid of VITCRI that resulted in the loss of all the members' organic cannabis grown exclusively for them, plus charges laid against two persons. The trial starts Sept. 14.

The VICS is still involved in several research protocols, with an upcoming study that will look into the effectiveness of cannabis and chronic pain.

A new board director, Michelle, was voted in by acclamation - thanks for your contribution. And a big thank you to Chris, the outgoing director, for

his time and commitment in the past. Mat received 'Employee of the Year' (well-deserved), prizes were doled out, cake and hot dogs were scooped down and more than a handful got a first-hand demonstration of the Volcano Vapourizer. See you next year!



Over 40 members + friends gathered to hear latest news

US - Study Finds Cannabis Safe For AIDS Patients

In the first(!!) US government-sanctioned test of the effects of cannabis on people infected with the AIDS virus, a San Francisco study has found that the patients on cannabis came out of a 21 day trial just as fit and quite a bit fatter than when they started. The findings, however, may be less significant than the fact that research involving cannabis took place at all.

Dr Donald Abrams, a researcher at the University of California at San Francisco, said "It's exciting. Its historic. It confirms that all the states that have allowed patients to use medical marijuana have not made a serious mistake."

By design, and at the insistence of the government funders, the Abrams study did not set out to prove or disprove the contention of the medical marijuana advocate that smoking cannabis has medicinal or healthful properties.

Abrams stated goal in this study was to determine whether the chemical components of marijuana in any way interfered with the body's ability to break down the components of protease inhibitors. These are the new class of anti-viral drugs that, taken in combination with others, have helped thousands of HIV-infected patients retain the health of their immune systems.

Previous lab tests had hinted that there could be a problem with a drug-to-drug interaction, because the active ingredients of both cannabis and protease drugs are broken down by the same enzyme.

After examining results from 62 subjects who completed the trials, Abrams concluded that there was no change in the level of the virus in the blood of patients who smoked marijuana or who took Marinol, a prescription drug containing synthetic THC, one of the active ingredients of cannabis.

The study also examined any change in appetite, caloric intake and body composition. In other words, did the cannabis help them to eat and gain weight? According to Abrams, many who smoked had a better appetite and put on some weight.

Source: "Study finds pot safe for AIDS patients", July 28, 2004, San Francisco Chronicle
<http://www.medpot.net/forums/index.php?showtopic=7332>

Congratulations to Philippe Lucas for being voted 'Freedom Fighter of the Month' in the Aug/Sept 2004 issue of High Times Grow America. As well, congratulations to Ted Smith of the Cannabis Buyers Club for a stay of his criminal charges. PEACE

VICS BBQ, Oct. 3, 2004

All VICS members and friends are invited to our annual BBQ, noon, Mt. Douglas Park (beach access)

Drug Stigma Hardest On Women:

Susan Boyd, a professor at the University of Victoria, has found that drug stigma is hardest on women. Her new book, *From Witches to Crack Moms*, is a call to the end of the drug war which historically has had a serious impact on women.

The witch hunts that occurred between the 15th and 18th centuries were considered drug scares partially because the witches were persecuted for the herbs they used for women who were pregnant. During the period of the witch hunts, 85% of those executed were women. A high rate of persecution for women in the drug wars is the pattern that continues to this day.

Today in Canada, about 14% of all the drug charges are laid against women. However, the percentage of women serving time in prison for drug related offences is higher than for men. In 2004, 30% of women serving time in a federal prisons have been convicted of drug related charges. In contrast, only 15% of men in federal prisons are serving a sentences for drug offences. That pattern is consistent with the numbers in the US and Great Britain.

Boyd found that when a woman comes up through the criminal justice system and is charged with the drug offence, judges are more harsh in their punishment. While the percentage of women arrested for drugs hasn't changed over the years, judges are more likely to send women to prison than in the past.

When Boyd examined why more women are serving time for drug offences in Canada, Greater Britain and the US, she concluded there has been a backlash against women, especially single parents.

"Drug-using mothers aren't only seen as breaking the law but they're seen as breaking gender role expectations of them," Boyd said.

The vast majority of people, both men and women, serving time for drug offences come from lower income backgrounds. And according to Boyd, that raises the question about what the war on a drugs is supposed to achieve.

Sources: "Drug stigma hardest on women, says a book by UVic professor", Victoria News, 16th July, 2004

Da Kine Smoke and Beverage Shops Halts Sales:

A Vancouver store that has been openly selling marijuana for four months has temporarily removed its illegal-drug inventory because it fears a police raid. Carol Gwilt, owner of Da Kine Smoke and Beverage Shops Inc., vowed to resume selling pot and hashish today via the Canadian Sanctuary Society, whose mandate is to make medicinal marijuana available in a safe environment.

"We'll be back in business soon," said Ms. Gwilt, adding she pulled the pot to protect her assets. "We're not shutting down, and we're not backing down. [Jail] is not OK, but it's all part of the deal. Marijuana is a part of BC, and it's a part of Canada."

Barb Windsor, the city's deputy chief licence inspector, said the matter can be referred to council with a recommendation to either revoke or suspend Da Kine's licence. Councillor Jim Green agreed the shop may be violating its licence, but added the city has not received any complaints about Da Kine so it may be filling a need. "I think we have to take an intelligent, compassionate look at these things," he said.

Source: National Post, Sept. 2, 2004, www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v04/n1243/a08.html

China Opens Methadone Clinic:

At first, addicts in Gejui, China, thought it might be a trap. The city had opened a clinic right on the main road, where it offered something called methadone, a drink that supposedly eliminated the craving for heroin, for less than \$1.

But word spread that the drink worked. Now, more than 160 addicts stream into the tiny clinic every afternoon for a shot of a bright green liquid that tastes vaguely of lime. Many say they've stopped using heroin, and that the methadone calms them and returns them to normal lives.

Methadone, a synthetic drug used to treat addiction in Western countries for more than 30 years, is gradually being legalized in China as the government tries to control the spread of AIDS from sharing dirty needles.

Eight methadone pilot programs have been launched this year in southern China, the heart of the AIDS epidemic because of its proximity to Southeast Asian drug hot spots. Each treats at most a few hundred patients.

Anti-drug advocates hail the programs as perhaps the best example of the central government's changing attitude toward drug abuse. After decades of treating addicts as criminals, shipping them off to bleak hospitals for years of hard labor or even publicly executing them, officials in Beijing told local and provincial governments to make "harm reduction" methods such as methadone and needle exchanges part of their health policies.

Although the government's drug-fighting budget is still paltry by Western standards and it may be several years before the programs are in wide use, advocates say China has made a breakthrough.

Source: Sun News (Myrtle Beach, SC), Aug.15, 2004, www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v04/n1174/a11.html

AIDS Message "Inappropriate" For Pattison Outdoor:

Is saving lives less important than offending the public? It appears that one advertising company knows what is good for us, and has pulled the plug on a national ad.

The Victoria Gay Men's Alliance is looking for answers after the billboard and outdoor advertising company Pattison Outdoor refused to sell advertising space to a national HIV/AIDS prevention programme aimed towards gay men.

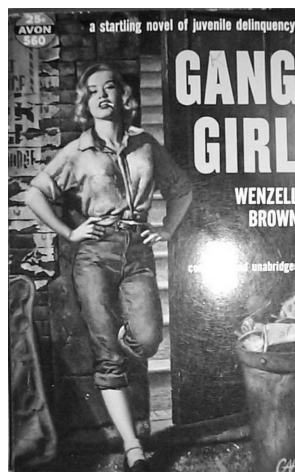
The Think Again campaign features an ad showing two shirtless man, one with his back to the other, with the accompanying text "He'd tell me if he's positive. He'd tell me if he's a negative. How would do you know what you know?" A print version of the ad ran in the local Monday Magazine.

A spokesperson from Pattison Outdoor called the message and accompanying image "inappropriate". Inappropriate for who?

The ads are important because the HIV infection rate is climbing within the gay community. Although survey results show that 75% of man who have sex with men always use condoms, reaching the remaining 25% that don't use condoms is critical.

A Victoria doctor states more than 50 per cent of the new HIV cases in Canada are men who have sex with men, and the Think Again campaign is the first HIV prevention campaign to be cured at that demographic in more than 15 years. Dr Doug McGhee feels that they need the campaign to reach the highest risk people. "We need public images. We need graphic, catchy images. We're trying to save lives."

Source: Monday Magazine, July 15 - 21, 2004



Marc Emery Gets 3 Months In Jail:

Marc Emery was sentenced to 92 days in jail in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan on August 19. Mr. Emery was convicted of trafficking in March 2004 because a witness saw him pass a joint.

Marc Emery launched a college speaking tour in the spring of 2004, only short months after his "Summer of Legalization" tour that saw him challenge national cannabis possession laws (and, apparently piss off a few people). At one of his last speech venues, the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Marc showed up at a late evening gathering at the Vimy Memorial Park. Student Justin McGowan described the scene:

"About 20 minutes after Marc showed up, three or four cops arrived and said "We smell marijuana". They asked if any body had marijuana and Marc said he had some. They arrested him."

Although Emery had less than three grams of cannabis in his possession, he was charged with trafficking because one of the students stated that Marc had passed him a joint. Emery was held for three nights and finally released on \$3,500 bail.

Enforcement of Canada's drug laws varies greatly across the country. While it is unlikely that a charge of trafficking would ever be laid against someone for passing a joint in Vancouver, it is much more likely in Saskatoon to face jail sentences for marijuana offences. When Mr. Emery showed up and got busted in Saskatoon, those in the system who resented Emery's activism had their chance to finally punish him.

"I didn't want to plead guilty," said Emery in a telephone interview with Cannabis Culture from the Saskatoon Correctional Centre where he is being held. "I told my lawyer 'I expect we'll be guilty,' meaning that I thought they would find me guilty. She misunderstood and put in a guilty plea on my behalf. However, I have no doubt I would have been convicted regardless, as the judge had it in for me."

After saying how he was going to "make an example" of the relentless activist, Judge Alberta Lavoie disregarded the advice of both lawyers, gave Emery a long lecture on law and democratic society and then sentenced him to 92 days in jail. Emery could be released after 62 days for good behavior.

Emery thinks his sentence may have made judicial history. Even the conservative newspaper The National Post stated that this sentence is over the top.

As Emery points out, no police officer actually saw him pass the joint yet a trafficking charge was laid due to third-hand testimony. Carrying on with this logic, anybody could be charged with trafficking if someone says 'I saw him sharing a joint with....' (and what if they are just being polite and passing it over to the next person?)

With upcoming federal legislation (yes, the dreaded cannabis decriminalization bill, again), Emery is encouraging people to write letters to politicians and to the media with a focus on changing the new bill, one that allows for legal possession, sharing and growing for oneself. Meanwhile, Marc Emery sits in jail serving as living proof that Canadian soft drug laws are draconian.

Source: "Marc Emery Speaks From Jail", Aug. 23, 2004, Cannabis Culture www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v04/n1202/a09.html

Health Survey Reveals Latest Drug Statistics:

A Statistics Canada report, 2002 Canadian Community Health Survey, was released July 21, 2004. The report says that the number of Canadians who admit to indulging in marijuana or hashish nearly doubled to 12.2% between 1989 and 2002 - and the highest rates of use were among teens. Provincially, BC had the highest rate of cannabis use at 15.7%, Nova Scotia was second at 13.7%

Unhealthy Prison Statistics:

According to Carolyn Ploem, a Halifax-based research consultant who worked on a project last year to educate inmates at Westmorland Institution, a minimum security prison in Dorchester, N.B. on the dangers of Hepatitis C, the rate of Hepatitis C infection among inmates at New Brunswick's three federal prisons is between 28% and 40%.

The total spread of the disease is not known because testing is voluntary and is not tracked by corrections officials. "Hepatitis C is rampant in both provincial and federal institutions," says Ploem. "The risks don't stop behind bars." Sharing needles remains the most likely way for an inmate to contract an infectious disease, Ploem says, although unsafe tattooing and sharing things like razors are also risks.

Hepatitis C is only one concern. Infection rates of HIV among inmates, already 10 times the level of the Canadian population, are also on the rise. At some prisons, as many as 12% of inmates have HIV. Nearly 2% system-wide are infected and the rate among female prisoners is more than double that. The number of AIDS cases jumped from 14 in 1990 to 235 out of a federal inmate population of about 12,815 in 2002.

And worse yet, says Ralf Jurgens, executive director of the Montreal-based Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, like Hepatitis C the problem is likely under-reported because only about a quarter of inmates undergo the voluntary testing.

Source: "Prison Breakout: The Rates Of Disease Among Inmates Is Rocketing Upwards", New Brunswick Telegraph-Journal, July 24, 2004 www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v04/n1060/a08.html

Definitions:

pukka, -ah (-a) *a.* (Anglo-Indian) of full weight; genuine; permanent, solidly built. [from Hindi *pakka* cooked, ripe, substantial] (The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 7th ed., 1983)

stigma *n.* 1. (archaic) mark branded on slave, criminal, etc. 2. Imputation attaching to person's reputation; stain on one's good name. 3. ... [Latin from Greek *stigma* -atos mark made by pointed instrument, brand] (ibid.)

tellurian *a. & n.* (inhabitant) of the earth. [from Latin *tellus -uris* earth + -IAN] (ibid.)

temperance *n.* moderation, self-restraint, in speech, conduct, etc., especially in eating and drinking; moderation in use of, or total abstinence from alcoholic liquors as beverages; **temperance society** etc. (for restriction or abolition of use of alcoholic drinks). [Middle English, from Anglo French *temperance* from Latin *temperantia*] (ibid.)

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and Quebec was third at 13.5%, according to the survey. The study showed that of the 3 million pot smokers, half smoke it less than once a month, 1 in 10 was a weekly user and 10% were daily tokers. BC had the highest rate of cannabis-related offences. The study also showed Canadians were less likely to use crack cocaine, ecstasy, LSD, amphetamines and heroin.

Source: The Province, July 22, 2004. www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v04/n1042/a04.html

Cannabis News:

Canada - RCMP Report Reveals Cannabis Exports Overstated

A recent RCMP report reveals that, far from being the major exporter of marijuana to the United States as some wish to portray, Canada accounts for only a small fraction of the American supply of pot. Citing the latest seizure statistics, the RCMP's annual assessment of the drug situation in Canada points out that most US marijuana is home-grown or smuggled in from Mexico.

While the amount of cannabis detected moving south from Canada has increased steadily since 2000, to almost 15,700 kilograms last year, it was dwarfed by the over 400,000 kilograms of Mexican marijuana seized at the US border in 2003.

In addition, American authorities continued to report that their primary source of marijuana remains their own country. The numbers contrast sharply with images of hordes of Canadian 'mules' heading south to do business or duffel bags tossed over the border.

Source: "Lots more marijuana gets into US from Mexico than from Canada", Times Colonist, July 20, 2004

RCMP Drug Officer Gets 4 Year Term For Selling Seized Pot

Joseph Daniel Ryan, the former Tantallon RCMP officer who sold marijuana seized by police, is now behind bars with other dealers. A Supreme Court judge sentenced him to four years in prison for what the Crown called "absolute corruption."

In June, Justice Walter Goodfellow found Mr. Ryan, an ex-member of the Tantallon RCMP's revered street team, guilty of marijuana trafficking and breach of trust. On August 30, the judge handed Mr. Ryan four-year concurrent sentences on each count.

Mr. Bright, a prominent defence lawyer brought in to prosecute the case for the Crown, told reporters Mr. Ryan used and abused his position. Mr. Bright said jail time was needed for deterrence. "The public has to be able to trust their police and to know that they can go to the police if there's a problem," he said.

Justice Goodfellow called Mr. Ryan a "dishonest, criminally active police officer," and added that Mr. Ryan broke the very law he was sworn to uphold and grossly abused his position of trust. Justice Goodfellow cited sheer greed as Mr. Ryan's motivation for turning to crime.

Mr. Ryan's actions also brought into question the work of other officers in his office. Followup investigations are ongoing.

Source: The Halifax Herald Limited 2004, Aug.31, 2004, www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v04/n1238/a04.html

Closed Med Pot Club Sues City of Oakland:

A shuttered Oakland medical marijuana club filed a lawsuit against Oakland Aug.24, saying it was unfairly denied a permit under an ordinance that cracked down on a downtown enclave known as "Oaksterdam." The suit, filed by Dragonfly Alternative Healing Clinic in Oakland, seeks a court order that would give the club a permit to continue operating this year "without threat of civil and/or criminal sanctions."

Dragonfly closed shortly after June 1 when a new city ordinance took effect that allows Oakland to regulate marijuana clubs and limit their number to four. The club reopened for about a month to serve its patients, then closed again Friday after the city reportedly threatened to penalize the building owner. The new limits adopted by the Oakland City Council broke up a cluster of about a dozen downtown marijuana clubs (known as "Oaksterdam") by forcing them to operate at least 1,000 feet (300 m) apart. The city has issued three business licenses but not yet the

fourth. California Advocate Relief Exchange (CARE) is the only club in the Oaksterdam area to get a license. Clubs without permits could face closure or remain open as cafes, without selling marijuana under Proposition 215.

Dragonfly's closure has harmed patients who say they have a proven medical necessity for the drug, the suit said.

"The City Council passed an ordinance which, while ostensibly enacted to protect the rights of patients, substantially hinders these rights, runs contrary to the meaning and spirit of the medical marijuana laws and violates both the state and federal constitutions," the suit said.

Danny Schultz, a San Francisco attorney representing Dragonfly, said several other medical marijuana clubs are also considering filing suit against the city. Although Oakland has been progressive in its support for medical marijuana in the past, Schultz said its actions against Dragonfly seem to be politically motivated.

Richard Lee, owner of two Oakland medical cannabis clubs, said he had supported the city's regulation of the clubs but not the limit of four. Lee said the city felt that Oaksterdam was colliding with other development plans. But he points out that the medical cannabis clubs brought in \$70 million dollars per year in gross revenue and attracted diners and shoppers that developers find attractive. Lee is optimistic that the city will eventually license more clubs, including those for non-medical cannabis users.

Source: Aug. 25, 2004, San Francisco Chronicle www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v04/n1217/a07.html

Prohibition is an awful flop.
We like it.
It can't stop what it's meant to stop.
We like it.
It's left a trail of graft and slime
It don't prohibit worth a dime
It's filled our land with vice and crime,
Nevertheless, we're for it.

by Franklin P. Adams,
New York World, 1931(?)

RESOURCE DIRECTORY:

AIDS Vancouver Island

1601 Blanshard, 384-2366

Hep-C Society of Canada

219-2750 Quadra, 388-4311

MS Society

1004 N.Park, 388-6496

V.P.W.A.

330-1105 Pandora, 382-7927

Law Centre

388-4516

Sacred Herb

106-561 Johnson, 384-0659

<http://www.sacredherb.com>

John W.Conroy, Q.C.

1-877-852-5110 (toll free)

<http://www.johnconroy.com>

BCCCS

Vancouver, 604-875-0448

<http://thecompassionclub.org>

Action Committee of People

with Disabilities

383-4105

Canadians for Safe Access

<http://www.safeaccess.ca>

Canadian Cannabis Coalition

<http://www.cannabiscoalition.ca>

Canada Medical Marijuana

<http://www.medicalmarihuana.ca>

Media Awareness Project

<http://www.mapinc.org>

DrugSense

<http://www.drugsense.org>

Health Canada

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hecs-sesc/ocma/>

1-866-337-7705

Norml Canada

<http://www.normlcanada.org>

Cannabis Health

<http://www.cannabishealth.com>

Cannabis Research Institute

<http://www.cannabisresearchinstituteinc.com>

Quis custodiet ipsos custodes. [Who will police the police?] -- Latin proverb