

CANNABINOID CHRONICLES



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Medical Cannabis News and Information

VICS 8TH BIRTHDAY BBQ

The Vancouver Island Compassion Society (VICS) celebrated its 8th birthday on September 30 at a cool but well-attended BBQ at Mt.

Douglas Park. Roughly 40 folks - members, staff and friends - braved a threatening sky in order to meet old friends, make connections, munch food and share indulgences. Thanks to Steve and all staff who made the event happen, thanks to our friends at Sacred Herb for gifts and donations, and special thanks to Chelsea for all her culinary help over the years. See you next year.



Canada - How Many Pillars This Time?

The conservative government announced that they are planning to spend \$64 million on a 'new' drug strategy for Canadians. Health Minister Tony Clement stated "the party's over" for illicit drug users. "In the next few days, we're going to be back in the business of an anti-drug strategy," Clement said. (Reminiscent of Ronnie and Nancy - just say maybe?)

Shortly after taking office last year, the conservatives decided not to go ahead with a Liberal bill to decriminalize small amounts of cannabis. Since then, the number of people arrested for smoking cannabis has jumped dramatically in several Canadian cities, in some cases by more than one third. Toronto, Vancouver, Ottawa and Halifax all reported increases in arrests for possession between 20 and 50% in 2006.

Critics say they are ignoring a mountain of research that shows the get-tough approach doesn't work.

"This is a failed approach. The experiment is done. The science is in," says Thomas Kerr, a researcher at the University of British Columbia and member of the university's faculty of medicine.

The \$64-million anti-drug strategy, announced on Oct 4, will be divided between preventing illegal drug use, treating drug dependencies and fighting drug production and trafficking. It is expected to include stiffer penalties for drug offenders and more money to stop drugs getting across the border. There will also be a massive campaign to warn young people not to use drugs.

It is not expected, says Liberal MP Keith Martin, to include money for what experts call "harm reduction." (see related article inside)

Source: Globe and Mail, 1 Oct 2007.

www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v07/n1130/a04.html

Canada - Quebec Should Administer MMAR for Residents, Says St-Maurice

The founder of the Montreal Compassion Club wants Quebec to take over the administration of the federal Medical Marijuana Access Regulations (MMAR) in the province. Marc-Boris St-Maurice said yesterday the program is "an embarrassing oxymoron."

He complained about major delays processing applications, licence renewals and changes of address. About 10 per cent of the club's 1,000 members have licences from the federal government authorizing them to buy medical marijuana and others have their doctor's authorization.

"Eighteen months ago we requested a supply of application forms for our clients which we still have not received," he said. "There are also frequent disturbing reports of doctors being pressured by Health Canada bureaucrats to reduce their patients' recommended daily dosage."

St-Maurice wants Quebec Health Minister Philippe Couillard to intervene and hopes to meet with provincial Health Department officials in the coming weeks.

"The field of health is a provincial jurisdiction and we believe that it would be more appropriate if this program was managed by our province instead of Ottawa," St-Maurice said.

Couillard said yesterday although he's not against the idea it's too soon to say whether the Quebec government should be in charge of medical marijuana in the province.

Source: Record, The (Kitchener), 03 Oct 2007.
www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v07/n1136/a06.html



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Science: Cannabidiol may be effective in preventing bovine spongiforme encephalopathy (mad cow disease)

According to basic research of scientists of the National Centre for Scientific Research in Valbonne, France, cannabidiol (CBD) may prevent the development of prion diseases, the most known being BSE (bovine spongiforme encephalopathy), which is often called mad cow disease. It is believed that the BSE may be transmitted to human beings. In humans, it is known as Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease. The infectious agent in prion diseases is believed to be a specific type of misfolded protein called prion. Misfolded prion proteins carry the disease between individuals and cause deterioration of the brain. The French researchers reported that the non-psychoactive cannabis constituent CBD inhibited the accumulation of prion proteins in both mouse and sheep prion-infected cells, whereas other cannabinoids were either weak or not effective. Moreover, after infection with mouse scrapie, a prion disease, CBD limited accumulation of the prion protein in the brain and significantly increased the survival time of infected mice. CBD inhibited the nerve damaging effects of prions in a concentration-dependent manner. Researchers noted that CBD may be a promising agent for the treatment of prion diseases.

Source: Dirikoc S, et al Nonpsychoactive cannabidiol prevents prion accumulation and protects neurons against prion toxicity. *J Neurosci* 2007;27(36):9537-44.

Science: Motility of the intestine

Researchers of the University of Munich, Germany, demonstrated in the isolated small intestine of rats that cannabinoids inhibited propulsion of the intestine. They concluded from their experiments that the CB1 receptor is involved in the regulation of small intestinal motility. "Therefore, CB1 receptors are a promising target for the treatment of motility disorders."

Source: Yucec B, et al. *Neurogastroenterol Motil* 2007;19(9):744-53.

Science: Osteoporosis

In cell experiments the synthetic cannabinoid ajulemic acid suppressed the development of osteoclasts from their precursors, a type of bone cells that reduce bone material and increase bone resorption. Ajulemic acid also induced apoptosis (programmed cell death) in mature osteoclasts. Researchers concluded that ajulemic acid may be a "useful therapy for diseases such as RA [rheumatoid arthritis] and osteoporosis in which bone resorption is a central feature." Source: George KL, et al. *J Cell Physiol*. 2007 Sep 4

Science: Schizophrenia and cognition

Australian researchers investigated the relationship between neuropsychological performance and cannabis use in schizophrenia in 60 persons with schizophrenia, of whom 44 were current or former cannabis users, and 17 healthy subjects. The healthy subjects performed better than the schizophrenia group in all cognitive domains. Within the schizophrenia group, a larger proportion of participants with current or former cannabis abuse/dependence demonstrated better performance than those without abuse/dependence on a component of psychomotor speed. Frequency of cannabis use were also positively associated with better neuropsychological performance. Researchers concluded that "cannabis use is associated with enhanced cognitive functioning in schizophrenia." Source: Coulston CM et al. *Schizophr Res*. 2007 Sep 6

Science: Cancer in the gut

In experimental studies increased endocannabinoid levels reduced the development of pre-stages of cancer in the mouse intestine. This effect was also achieved by a synthetic cannabinoid (HU-210). Source: Izzo AA et al. *J Mol Med*. 2007 Sep 6

US: Fight for the acceptance of state medicinal cannabis laws by the Bush administration

While now all eight Democratic presidential candidates for the election in 2008 have pledged to stop federal raids on medical cannabis patients in the 12 states with laws allowing the use of cannabis to treat medical conditions, raids continue in California and started in New Mexico. California was the first state to legalize the medical use of cannabis in 1996, New Mexico was the last in 2007.

The governor of New Mexico, Bill Richardson, heavily criticized the Bush administration over the first raid in New Mexico and the arrest of a wheelchair-bound man who was certified by the state Health Department to possess and use cannabis for medical reasons. A task force with members of the federal Drug Enforcement Agency, the FBI and state and local police agencies raided the home of Leonard French, who is one of 38 patients so far approved to participate in the state medical cannabis program, and seized his cannabis plants. In recent months several raids of federal agents were also performed on medical cannabis distribution centres in California.

"I'm very concerned that the Bush administration, instead of going after drug dealers, are going after people who are suffering from cancer and paraplegics," Richardson said at a news conference. The governor, who is running for president, pledged to fight for the medical cannabis program, saying it's a matter of state sovereignty. Earlier in August Richardson sent Bush an open letter urging the administration to change its "misguided policy" and to stop wasting resources "to intimidate states trying to implement medical marijuana programs."

Sources: *New Mexican* of 29 and 30 August 2007, *Boston Globe* of 22 August 2007

Science: Depression

In an animal model of depression the activation of CB1 receptors in a certain area of the brain (the dorsal hippocampus) resulted in an antidepressant-like response. The Canadian researchers highlighted "the potential importance of changes in the hippocampal endocannabinoid system following stress or antidepressant treatment with respect to the manifestation and/or treatment of depression."

Source: McLaughlin RJ, et al. *Behav Pharmacol*. 2007 Sep;18(5-6):431-8.

Science: Heart protection

According to a study of researchers of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem the non-psychoactive cannabinoid cannabidiol (CBD) protected the heart against damage by reduced blood supply in an animal study. A heart artery was ligated in rats for 30 minutes. In animals treated thereafter for 7 days with CBD infarct size was reduced by 66 per cent compared to non-treated rats.

Source: Durst R, et al. *Am J Physiol Heart Circ Physiol*. 2007 Sep 2

Homeless Numbers in Victoria

Last spring, a homeless survey in the Capital Regional District found that there were at least 1242 people without homes or who were unstably housed (those who can become homeless at any time). This is roughly a 60% increase since the previous count a few years ago. And these were the individuals who responded. Contrary to common belief, many of the homeless are from our region or within BC. 75% of homeless were previously housed in the region. And contrary to common belief that we are wasting money when we help these individuals, it costs **\$12,000 more per year** to keep someone on the street than to provide them with a modest income and some support. Unfortunately, the critical shortage of affordable housing does little to help.

So even if you are a callous bean-counter, it makes more economic sense to help and support our citizens rather than turn a blind eye and hope it goes somewhere else. How about it Victoria?

Thanks to Rev. Al Tysick and the rest of the Downtown Service Providers Committee

VICS Constitutional Challenge Continues

The VICS constitutional challenge continues again on October 15th to October 19th at the downtown Victoria courthouse.

Rimonabant Not Weight Loss Panacea

Rimonabant, a controversial cannabinoid antagonist for the treatment of obesity, could be available in Canada next year. The drug is used to reduce appetite and works by blocking the natural binding of endogenous cannabinoids (and exogenous ones such as THC) to the neuronal CB1 receptors, causing people to lose their appetites.

We all make our own natural cannabinoids, cannabis-like chemical compounds. "If you're hungry," says Dr. Mark Ware, a professor at McGill University's pain centre, "they're probably active in you right now."

Given the levels of obesity in North America, the number of weight-loss drugs on the market, and our desire to be thin, rimonabant could be a big seller.

"It's not a bikini drug," says Dr. Josee Dubuc-Lissoir of Sanofi-Aventis, the French manufacturer (sold in Europe as Acomplia). She says an education campaign will limit prescribing it to obese individuals fighting diabetes and cardiovascular disease. An attempt by Sanofi-Aventis to market the drug as a weight loss aid in the US was rejected by the Food and Drug Administration earlier this year. Sanofi-Aventis is also doing research to determine the value of the drug as an aid to quitting smoking.

On one hand, as long as you stay on it, the drug reduces appetite, blood sugar, waist size and weight (5 to 10%), while it raises HDL ('good') cholesterol. In trials, however, patients who took the drug lost weight but gained most of it came back once off the drug, implying possible indefinite use.

On the other hand, many clinical trial patients reported adverse effects such as nausea and anxiety. Not surprisingly, patients administered both Acomplia and cannabis reported a decline in euphoric feelings.

And side effects notwithstanding, there is great concern how the drug works on the endocannabinoid receptor system, a homeostatic regulator of all body systems. Reports of severe depression are frequent. This is deemed to result from the drug being active in the central nervous system, an area of human physiology so complex that drug effects are highly difficult to determine reliably. The reported development of previously clinically silent multiple sclerosis in one patient taking rimonabant suggests that any patients with an underlying neurological condition should not take it, given the neuroprotective role of the endocannabinoid system in many experimental paradigms of neurological disease.

Dr. Mitch Earleywine, author of 'Understanding Marijuana: A New Look at the Scientific Evidence', is not surprised to hear about the intolerable side effects experienced by some patients. "Given what we are now learning about the endocannabinoid system, one would think that any blocking of its receptors, especially long-term, would be an invitation for a host of negative health consequences involving pain, brain function, and mood, particularly depression."

Hmm, sounds yummy. More research anyone?

Source: Maclean's Magazine, 24 Sep 2007, www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v07/n1104/a03.html; BBC News, June 15, 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/6755665.stm>

***** Goodbyes *****

We are sad to announce the known loss of three members over the past few months:
Stephen MacDonald, Bruce Polly, and Bart Wittke. Peace.

Find us online at <http://www.thevics.com>

InSite Gets 6 Month Reprieve

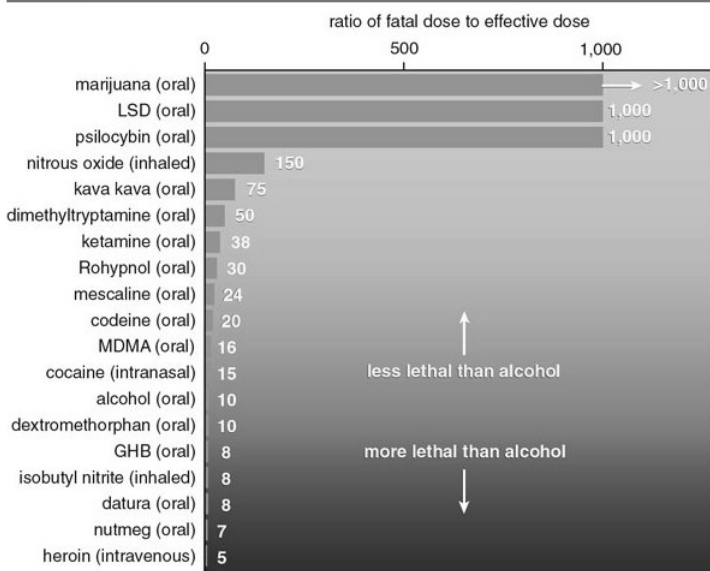
The federal government's six-month extension to a supervised injection site in Vancouver is a stalling tactic unlikely to bolster Victoria's push for a similar research project, say local politicians. Health Minister Tony Clement has extended until June 2008 an exemption, under Section 56 of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, to InSite, a supervised injection site in Vancouver. But Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca Liberal MP Keith Martin called the extension a crass attempt by the war-on-drug conservatives to cool political heat on them until a federal election is completed - after which they'll shut it down if they can.

"If Prime Minister Harper really believed that InSite is a useful tool in treating addictions, he would have extended the program for years, not months."

In a bizarre compassionate about-face, even Premier Gordon Campbell is waving the InSite flag. "I think that it's actually been a facility and a service that's made a difference. So I would like to have it stay open."

A recent study published by the University of B.C.'s Dr. Thomas Kerr found InSite reduced the risk of overdoses and encouraged users to seek treatment. Insite has been praised for helping slow the spread of serious diseases by preventing users from sharing needles. Victoria, based on studies by Vancouver Island's chief medical health officer and the Centre for Addictions Research of B.C., is applying to Health Canada for the same exemption.

Source: Victoria Times-Colonist, 3 Oct 2007. www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v07/n1133/a02.html



DEFINITIONS

equivocal 1. *a.* unclear in meaning or intention; ambiguous. 2. (Of person, character, etc.) questionable, suspicious [from Late Latin *aequivocus*]

(The Oxford Dictionary Online, <http://www.askoxford.com>)

ruminate 1. *v.i. & t.* think deeply about something. 2. *v.i.* (of a ruminant) chew the cud. [from Latin *ruminari*] (*ibid.*)

ruse *n.* a stratagem or trick. [from Old French *ruser* 'use trickery', earlier 'drive back', perhaps from Latin *rursus* 'backwards'] (*ibid.*)

viviparous *a.* 1 (of an animal) bringing forth live young which have developed inside the body of the parent. 2 (of a plant) reproducing from buds which form plantlets while still attached to the parent plant, or from seeds which germinate within the fruit. [from Latin *viviparus*, from *vivus* 'alive' + *-parus* 'bearing'] (*ibid.*)

Cannabis; Extracting the Medicine

Arno Hazekamp from the Department of Pharmacognosy, Faculty of Science, Leiden University, Germany, has published a doctoral thesis titled "Cannabis; Extracting The Medicine" (available online, see below). He argues that the main purpose of this paper is to bring cannabis for medical purposes, as a whole, back into focus.

Weighing in over 180 pages, Hazekamp begins with a general introduction to cannabis as medicine (history, botany, constituents, biochemical mechanisms, etc.), and then jumps into an evaluation, quantitative analysis and methodology of scientific preparation of medicinal grade cannabis. Hazekamp then discusses cannabis tea and its preparation, and explores methods on increasing the solubility of THC for more efficient delivery. In the final chapter, he evaluates the Volcano™ vaporizer as a delivery method aimed at suppressing harmful respiratory toxins.

Below is the abstract:

The cannabis plant (*Cannabis sativa L.*) has a long history as a recreational drug, but also as part of traditional medicine in many cultures. Nowadays, it is used by a large number of patients worldwide, to ameliorate the symptoms of diseases varying from cancer and AIDS to multiple sclerosis and migraine. The discovery of cannabinoid-receptors and the endocannabinoid system have opened up a new and exciting field of research. But despite the pharmaceutical potential of cannabis, its classification as a narcotic drug has prevented the successful development of cannabis into modern medicine. Although a huge number of scientific papers has been published on cannabis, there is currently no scientific consensus on the usefulness of medicinal cannabis. In 2004, The Netherlands became the first country to make herbal cannabis available as a prescription drug. The phytochemical research presented in this thesis has been possible because of the availability of these high-grade cannabis plants. This thesis has a specific focus on the cannabinoids and on analytical problems that currently obstruct advanced study of the cannabis plant. Furthermore, it deals with much needed methods for quality control and with administration forms of medicinal cannabis. In general, it may be considered a general guidebook, covering all the basic phytochemical aspects of medicinal cannabis.

For copies visit: <https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/12297> Published Sept 5, 2007. ISBN 9789090219974

New Operating Hours: The VICS will be opening an hour earlier, on a trial basis, starting November 1. Our hours of operation will be 10 am to 5 pm weekdays, and 10 am to 4 pm on weekends. We hope this helps to serve our community better.

Medical Cannabis Bill of Rights

This Medical Cannabis Patients Bill of Rights was designed to outline the basic rights of critically and chronically ill medical cannabis users, and to urge the federal government to protect these individuals from stigma, arrest and prosecution.

- I am not a criminal; I am a person living with a medical condition and use cannabis to alleviate my suffering; I am capable of making fundamental decisions about my health.
- I have the right to live free of unnecessary suffering, social stigma and interference from the state, and should not have to choose between my personal liberty and my health.
- I have the right to produce my own medicine if I am willing and able to do so, or to access it from a safe source without fear of arrest and persecution.
- It is the federal government's moral, legal and constitutional obligation to defend these basic and inalienable human rights, and to ensure that no organization or individual unduly interferes with them.

By The Numbers....

A 1998 report by the US National Institute on Drug Abuse and the US National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism estimated the economic costs of alcohol abuse in the United States to be \$148.02 billion in 1992, 80% (\$119.32 billion) of which were due to alcohol-related illness (including health care expenditures, impaired productivity and premature death). To contrast, illegal drug abuse cost a total of \$97.66 billion in 1992, of which less than 40% (\$38.71 billion) was due to drug-related illness or premature death. This figure includes \$4.16 billion in HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis treatment costs. (US population is 18% larger today)

Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse and National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. The Economic Costs of Alcohol and Drug Abuse in the United States, 1992 (Washington, DC: May 1998)



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Canadians for Safe Access

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<http://thecompassionclub.org>

DrugSense

<http://www.drugsense.org>

Action Committee of People with Disabilities

383-4105

Canadian Cannabis Coalition

www.cannabiscoalition.ca

Canada Medical Marihuana

www.medicalmarihuana.ca

Media Awareness Project

<http://www.mapinc.org>

Drug Policy Alliance

<http://www.drugpolicy.org>

Health Canada

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/marihuana/index_e.html

1-866-337-7705

Norml Canada

<http://www.normlcanada.org>

Cannabis Health

www.cannabishealth.com

ICRS

<http://cannabinoidsociety.org>

CannabisLinks.ca

"The revolution will not be televised, WILL not be televised, WILL NOT BE TELEvised.

The revolution will be no re-run brothers; The revolution will be live."

- Gil Scott-Heron, from the song 'The Revolution Will Not Be Televised', 1971