

BRATISLAVA MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2013



World Health Organization

Legalization of Medical Cannabis

Study Guide

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Letter from the Chair

Honorable delegates,

It is my honor to welcome you to this year's 13th BratMUN conference. My name is Jan Nemcok and I will be your chairman alongside my two underchairs Gujo Ngujen and Adam Seruga. It will be a pleasure to help you in our committee the World Health Organization, and I am looking forward to our debates.

I have participated in MUN's beforehand as I expect many of you have done as well, and have also had the pleasure of getting to be an underchair in the WIPO committee in during last year's BratMUN. I noticed a few things in the past that are crucial to fully participate in a MUN and to do your best. I highly suggest you prepare for our committee more than just reading the study guide. It will help you greatly in our debates and will give you an edge during the conference. I also ask you to remember that when you participate in a MUN it is important to act as if you were representing the country you were assigned to instead of your own ideas. You are also strongly advised to prepare your arguments before the conference starts so you have them thoroughly thought out and can spend time during the conference to form new ideas.

As you know our committee topic is *The Legalization of Medical Cannabis*. The UN cannot force the legalization of medical cannabis onto their countries, but what we will be discussing is whether or not it is important to advise countries to legalize medical cannabis. This topic has many pros and cons, and so it is crucial to study about the topic a lot and have an open mind about the facts. You should think of this topic not only in the medical point of view, but also by the many other benefits and negatives of legalizing medical cannabis such as the impact on economics, social impact, security issues of it, etc. Make sure to study up about the other countries participating in our committee to know which countries share your perspective so you know which resolution to take part in. Once again I remind you to make sure you express your countries opinion on the topic instead of your own.

I hope that you have an idea about the basics of our committee based of this short into. Good luck with preparing for the topic, and I hope you all have many facts prepared for our discussion. My underchairs and I will try to make this conference as enjoyable for you as possible, and I truly believe that you will also like the activities after the conference and our wonderful city of Bratislava.

Sincerely,

Jan Nemcok

Table of Contents

Letter from the Chair.....	1
History of Medial Cannabis.....	3
Terminology.....	6
Usage of Cannabis.....	6
Health Effects of Cannabis Consumption.....	7
Other health issues.....	7
Smoking cannabis during pregnancy.....	7
Therapeutic Use of Cannabis.....	8
Methods of Consumption of Cannabis.....	8
Countries in which Cannabis is Legal/ Decriminalized.....	9
Suggested Literature.....	11

History of Medical Cannabis

Marijuana has used long before most of the people realize. Hemp is known to be used for hempen fibers, oil from the seeds, seeds for food, a medicine and for its psychoactive substances. The use of cannabis has existed over ten thousand years ago and is one the oldest crops used for cultivation. It was cultivated in China as early as 4000 BC. Most cultures viewed Marijuana as a gift for its versatile uses, it was used during ceremonials, at which time it was burned as incense, ingested for deep meditative, smoked for pleasure, or worn as cloths during these ceremonies.

The first recorded use of cannabis as a medicine was in China, by a Chinese Emperor Shen-Nung who discovered marijuana's healing properties and used it to cure constipation, female disorders, malaria, rheumatism and other health problems. In India, cannabis has been used for lowering fevers, inducing sleep, stimulating appetite or improving digestion. In Africa it was used for dysentery, malaria, and other fevers. It was also highly valued in the medieval Europe. The English clergyman Robert Burton was famous for his work *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, where he mentioned the use of cannabis as depression treatment. *The New English Dispensatory* (1764), advises for skin inflammation applying hemp roots, which was already popular in Eastern Europe.

But it was not until 1611, where hemp was first brought to North America by Puritans (Jamestown Settlers) where it was firstly cultivated in America for main purpose to produce hemp fiber, an important export. In 1762, "Virginia awarded bounties for hemp culture and manufacture, and imposed penalties on those who did not produce it."

Even the first presidents of the United States, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson have noted in their diaries that they grow hemp on their farms. Washington's diary indicates that he grew hemp at Mount Vernon, and his plantation lasted about 30 years. Throughout the diary he describes about the quality of seeds and importance of cultivating these seeds. Both Washington and Jefferson disliked tobacco, thus enjoying smoking Marijuana, but there is no hard evidence to support it. Jefferson was a promoter of hemp and used marijuana as currency when money from the government was in short supply in 1781. Moreover, he believed that marijuana is a superior crop to tobacco because it was easier to cultivate than tobacco. It was the start of the boom for the marijuana use as a narcotic.

In 1799, Napoleon's forces invaded Egypt and with their scientific expedition team, they bring back cannabis to France. The cannabis was found to have sedative and pain relieving effects and quickly became accepted in Western medicine.

In 1830 was a significant year for medical marijuana because of the first Western physician to take an interest on cannabis William Brooke O'Shaughnessy, who observed cannabis usage in India. According to his observation he was impressed with its muscle-relaxant properties after giving animals and patients suffering from rabies, rheumatism, epilepsy a tincture of hemp, a solution of cannabis in alcohol which was taken orally. When he returned to England in 1842, he reintroduced cannabis as a medicine to pharmacists. Soon doctors in Europe and

United States started to use cannabis for variety of physical conditions such as muscle spasm, menstrual cramps, and sedative to induce sleep. It is said that even Queen Victoria used cannabis against pain for her menstrual cramps used as tincture of hemp prescribed by her doctor.

In the nineteenth century Marijuana became very popular in many medicinal products and was sold openly in public pharmacies. It was praised by many physicians and found by a French doctor Jacques-Joseph Moreau that Cannabis suppresses headaches, increases appetites, and helped people to sleep. It became a fad in the West, mostly France and also United States.

In the late nineteenth century, new drugs such as aspirin, chloral hydrate, and barbiturates were introduced as more stable and more reliable than *Cannabis indica*. Because of Cannabis's unpredictable responses after a variety of applications on individuals, Cannabis was hastened to be taken away from pharmacies as a medicine. But the new drugs in the United States had tremendous disadvantages, thousands of people died from bleeding from aspirin effects and yes, barbiturates have even far more dangerous effects. Therefore, most of doctors turned back to cannabis.

After 1940 when it became possible to study chemical relatives of tetrahydrocannabinol that might have proved cannabis more stable and find specific effects, it was impossible due to the Marijuana Tax Act of 1937 were it prohibited any such experimentation.

After the Mexican Revolution in 1910, Mexicans immigrated to United States and introduce recreational use of marijuana to the American culture. That is when Anti-drug campaigners started to act and President Wilson signs the Harrison Act to control the manufacture of opium and regulated the international trade. In the Harrison Act, it states that opium can be imported or exported only for medicinal purposes and impose a special tax upon all persons who sell and distribute opium or coca leaves. Moreover, The Harrison Act states that opium can only be consumed after a prescription by a physician. However, it does not apply to marijuana.

In the 1915 up to 1927, 10 States passes Marijuana prohibition laws, Utah being the first one. At the second Opium Conference in Feb. 1925, "Indian hemp" (cannabis) used only for scientific and medical purposes thus restricting the import and export of cannabis resin.

In the UK 1929, cannabis was added to the list of prohibited drugs "Dangerous Drugs Act in 1928".

Marijuana Tax Act, a national campaign against marijuana states to criminalize marijuana and restrict possession of the drug to individuals who paid excise tax for medical and industrial uses. "After the passage of the Act, prescriptions of marijuana was declined because doctors generally decided it was easier not to prescribe marijuana than to deal with the extra work imposed by the new law."

In 1938-1944, LaGuardia's Reports states that the practice of smoking marijuana does not lead to addiction in the medical sense of the words, nor it leads to any other drugs as

morphine or heroin addiction. The publicity concerning the catastrophic effects of smoking marijuana in New York City is unfounded.

Boggs Acts, 1951, sets mandatory prison sentences for drug-related offences including marijuana.

Narcotics Control Act, 1956, sets stricter mandatory sentences for drug related offenses. A first offence for marijuana possessions carrying minimum sentence of 2-10 years with fine up to \$20,000.

1970, Controlled Substances Act classifies marijuana as Schedule 1 with high potential for abuse, no current acceptance of medical use in US, and lack of acceptance for safety use of the drug or other substance under medical supervision. National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML) founded to end marijuana prohibition.

1971, UK introduces a drug classification system and sentencing guidelines, putting Cannabis into class B (a middle class). President Nixon is against the legalization of marijuana even if Shafer Commission (National Commission on Marijuana and Drug Abuse) recommends it and declares war on drugs.

1972, NORML petition to reclassify marijuana under Controlled Substances Act as Schedule 2 to be legally prescribe by physician was refused to be accepted. And Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) was established.

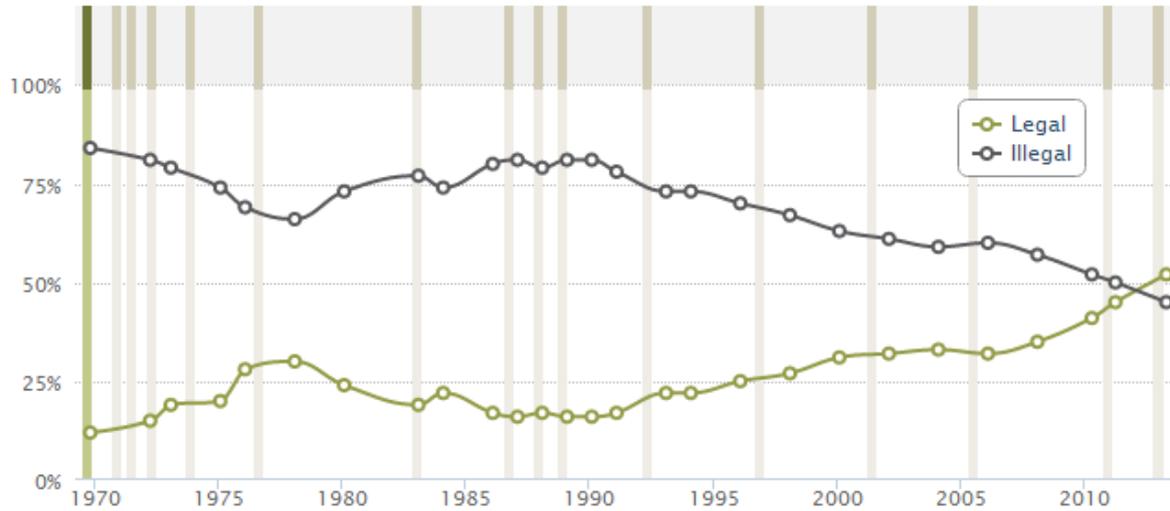
Netherlands is first to decriminalize marijuana in 1976 under Dutch law, where possession remains a crime. After 1980, a system of coffee shops was introduced with the selling cannabis to adults in small quantities.

In 1986, President Reagan signed the Anti-Drug Abuse Act where possession of 100 marijuana plants received the same penalty as possession of 100 grams of heroin. Anti-Drug Abuse Act established a "three strikes and you're out" policy, requiring life sentences for repeat drug offenders, and providing for the death penalty for "drug kingpins."

In 1990-1992, Scientists discover Cannabinoid Receptors and Endocannabinoid.

In 1996, California becomes first state to legalize medical marijuana.

Do you think the use of marijuana should be made legal or illegal?



Source: Gallup, General Social Survey and Pew Research Center

Graph representing the perception of people on the topic marijuana to be legal or not throughout the history.

Terminology

Cannabis is a generic term used to denote the several psychoactive preparations of the plant *Cannabis sativa*. The main component which causes its psychotropic effects is called THC. There are also several other compounds called cannabinoids, which are structurally similar to THC. Cannabis is also called “Marijuana” often based off the Mexican term, and is usually aimed at the leaves or other plant material.

Usage of Cannabis

At the moment cannabis is the most widely used, cultivated and trafficked drug in the world. About 180.6 million people consume cannabis per year. That is 3.9% of the world’s population. In comparison, only 0.2% of the world’s population consumes cocaine per year. The largest consumers of this drug are in North America, Western Europe and Australia. In majority this drug is abused by young people, with 5.5 percent of the total population of youth in the ages 12-17 in North America having tried out cannabis. In grades 8, 10, and 12 up to 1 in 16 students smoke marijuana daily. This drug is said to be very simply obtained and so there is an expectation for the number of cannabis consumers to increase in the coming years.

Health Effects of Cannabis Consumption

Cannabis impairs cognitive development, which is the capability to learn. It is common to have difficulties remembering learned items if cannabis is consumed during studying and/or during the recall periods. It also decreases motor coordination, divided attention, and operative tasks. Humans find it difficult to operate complex machinery, and it is dangerous to drive under the influence of cannabis seeing as there is an increased risk factor of an accident.

Other health issues include:

- selective impairment of cognitive functioning which include the organization and integration of complex information involving various mechanisms of attention and memory processes;
- prolonged use may lead to greater impairment, which may not recover with cessation of use, and which could affect daily life functions;
- development of a cannabis dependence syndrome characterized by a loss of control over cannabis use is likely in chronic users;
- cannabis use can exacerbate schizophrenia in affected individuals;
- epithelial injury of the trachea and major bronchi is caused by long-term cannabis smoking;
- airway injury, lung inflammation, and impaired pulmonary defense against infection from persistent cannabis consumption over prolonged periods;
- heavy cannabis consumption is associated with a higher prevalence of symptoms of chronic bronchitis and a higher incidence of acute bronchitis than in the non-smoking cohort;
- cannabis used during pregnancy is associated with impairment in fetal development leading to a reduction in birth weight;
- cannabis use during pregnancy may lead to postnatal risk of rare forms of cancer although more research is needed in this area.

Smoking cannabis during pregnancy can lead to:

- Cannabis used during pregnancy is associated with impairment in fetal development leading to a reduction in birth weight;
- Cannabis use during pregnancy may lead to postnatal risk of rare forms of cancer although more research is needed in this area.
- THC can lead to the depression of fetal heart rates.
- Children whose mothers consumed cannabis during pregnancy are more likely to have lower verbal and memory scores than children whose mother did not.
- If a nursing mother consumes cannabis she passes on some of the THC to her child, causing a slow in the child's motor development.

Because of this it is highly suggested that a woman that is pregnant or is nursing a child should not consume cannabis.

Therapeutic Use of Cannabis

Although there are many negative health effects of cannabis, there are also many therapeutic uses for the drug. Some of these include:

- Recent studies have shown that the use of cannabinoids can be therapeutic for nausea and vomiting during diseases such as cancer and AIDS.
- The use of cannabis causes a decrease in the pressure in our eyes, helping the treatment of such diseases as glaucoma.
- There is also a therapeutic use of cannabis for asthma.
- It can also be used as an anti-depressant in many cases seeing as it makes the user cheer up.
- Cannabis also increases the appetite of the user, which can be used in cases where the patient has problems eating because of a sickness and for patients suffering from anorexia.
- Cannabis can help cure insomnia in many cases.
- It can help with many psychological diseases such as post-traumatic stress disorder, ghost pains, and many others.

Methods of Consumption of Cannabis

There are many ways to consume cannabis to make get THC into your bloodstream. Probably the most popular way of consuming cannabis is by smoking it. People roll the cannabis into a cigarette, called a joint, by putting it into a glass bong and taking a “hit”, through different types of pipes, smoking it through bottles/cans, etc. There are plentiful ways to smoke cannabis but it is suggested by doctors to rather consume it in different ways as inhaling the smoke from cannabis can lead to respiratory problems because of tar coating the patients lungs.

A safer way of ingesting cannabis is through a vaporiser. This is an electronic machine that heats up the cannabis at a lower temperature allowing for the THC and other healing components to be released without there being the harmful smoke. This is done with great accuracy seeing as the whole machine is digitalized. This is a preferred alternative to smoking in the eyes of prescribing doctors.

Another common method of consuming cannabis is by “Marijuana edibles.” You get a much different “high” from consuming foods that contain cannabis in them in comparison to ingesting the THC by smoking cannabis. In this case it takes much longer for the feeling to kick in, but then it lasts longer than from smoking. The problem with marijuana edibles is that there is a much higher risk of “overdosing” off them and so also over-medicating. This is because of the time period during which you do not feel any high, and so it leads for people to eat more edibles expecting this to lead to a high sooner. It can also be caused because cannabis makes you have a larger appetite, and so can cause you to eat more of the edibles than you would smoke.

Countries in which Cannabis is Legal/ Decriminalized

Notes: decriminalized= not legal but no serious consequences, usually drug education, treatments, etc..

<i>Country</i>	<i>Possession</i>	<i>Sale</i>	<i>Transport</i>	<i>Cultivation</i>
Argentina	decriminalized			
Australia	decriminalized in some states			
Belgium	decriminalized			decriminalized for one female plant
Brazil	illegal but tolerated			
Cambodia	de facto legal	de facto legal	de facto legal	de facto legal
Canada	medical and industrial use is legal, needs a government issued license			illegal unless having a license for medical use issued by government
Colombia	decriminalized			
Costa Rica	decriminalized			
Croatia	decriminalized			
Czech Republic	decriminalized		decriminalized	decriminalized
Ecuador	decriminalized			
Estonia	decriminalized			
France	legal for medical use			
India	regulated by government	sale is legal in authorized shops		legal with a license issued by the government
Iran	legal if used in making food	regulated-legal	regulated-legal	legal
Mexico	decriminalized			
Nepal	illegal but not regulated			
Netherlands	decriminalized	decriminalized	illegal but tolerated	legal for personal use

<i>Country</i>	<i>Possession</i>	<i>Sale</i>	<i>Transport</i>	<i>Cultivation</i>
North Korea	legal	legal	legal	legal
Pakistan	illegal but tolerated			
Peru	decriminalized			
Portugal	decriminalized		decriminalized	
Spain	decriminalized			legal
Switzerland	decriminalized		depends on circumstances	legal in some cantons
USA	illegal by federal law, legal by state laws in Colorado and Washington, decriminalized in 14 states			
Uruguay	legal for personal use			

Suggested Literature

History of cannabis:

<http://medicalmarijuana.procon.org/view.timeline.php?timelineID=000026>

http://www.maps.org/mmj/grinspoon_history_cannabis_medicine.pdf

<http://www.people-press.org/2013/04/04/marijuana-timeline/>

Basic facts about cannabis:

<http://www.drugs.com/marijuana.html>

World drug report:

<http://www.unodc.org/wdr/en/cannabis.html>

Basic facts about cannabis:

http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/facts/cannabis/en/

International narcotics control board:

<http://www.incb.org/incb/en/narcotic-drugs/index.html>

Drug trafficking:

<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/drug-trafficking/index.html>

About WHO:

<http://www.who.int/about/en/>

Economic impact of cannabis:

<http://news.nationalpost.com/2013/08/27/experts-disagree-on-economic-impact-of-legalizing-marijuana-in-canada/>

Storys about medical marijuana:

<http://realmofcaringfoundation.org/>

Dr. Sanjay Gupta on the consumption of marijuana, CNN:

<http://edition.cnn.com/2013/08/08/health/gupta-changed-mind-marijuana/index.html>

Consumption of cannabis

<http://www.unitedpatientsgroup.com/resources/methods-of-consumption>