

El Cerrito Police Department

Memorandum

Date: April 18, 2007
To: Scott C. Kirkland Chief of Police
From: Cmdr. M. Regan
Subject: Marijuana Information January / March 2007

I have continued to collect information related to marijuana dispensaries and related issues. I have assembled the information in the following categories;

- Juveniles and Marijuana
- Associated Crimes
- Trends
- Opinions on the abuse of "Medical Marijuana" model

Each entry is an excerpt of the original article. The full article can be found at the listed source link.

One of the most disturbing issues related to our states position on marijuana is the ease with which marijuana finds its way into the hands our children. We have asserted from the beginning that the lack of regulation involved in the recommendation process has led to the issuance of these recommendations high school students. While we believe this to be an on-going problem, it is not regularly publicized. However, I believe the problem to be very real. Over the past few months, there have been a number of sensational cases involving children which have garnered media attention.

Medical Marijuana Readily Available To California High School Students

Web Editor: [Matt Bush](#), Online Content Producer

Created: 3/9/2007 1:47:21 PM / Updated: 3/9/2007 2:09:22 PM

Some California teens are giving a new meaning to "high" school. Students are finding easy access to medical marijuana cards and presenting those cards to school authorities as a legitimate excuse for getting high. "It's not a get out of jail free card at all," said Cathrine Martin, of the Grossmont Union School District. Martin says even though medical marijuana is legal in California, the law doesn't apply to schools which are subject to federal law. **The district also says the students most recently suspended for being high with cards in hand, didn't have major illnesses. "Students are getting them for things like sleeplessness and stress, it just draws into question how easy is it for people to get their hands on these cards," said Martin.** According to the district attorney's office, it's extremely easy if you know where to look. During a series of recent under cover sting operations, DA investigators identified a handful of San Diego Doctors who prescribe marijuana to just about anyone, so long as they had a symptom and money.

One such location was an office called Medimar. NBC has learned Dr. Kenneth Johnson of Medimar is the same doctor who signed off on at least one of the Grossmont District students. His business was among those targeted and shut down in the police sting. "It was pretty much you had a short consultation. Come in and filled out a short questionnaire, talk to a couple guys about it, get a prescription and then you'd walk across the hall and get your prescription filled," said Ben Martin, a neighboring tenant to Medimar.

Source: <http://www.wesh6.com/news/watercooler/article.aspx?storyid=54559>

Caution: Marijuana may not be lesser evil

By Rita Rubin, USA TODAY

Tyreol Gardner first smoked marijuana when he was 13. "The main reason I tried it was curiosity," Gardner recalls. "I wanted to see what it felt like." He liked what it felt like, and by age 15, he was smoking pot every week. He supported his habit with the money his parents gave him for getting straight A's on his report card. They didn't have a clue. "By 16, when I got my license, it turned into a fairly everyday thing," says Gardner, now 24. "I believe it is very addictive, especially for people with addictive personalities." . . . studies have shown that when regular pot smokers quit, they do experience withdrawal symptoms, a characteristic used to predict addictiveness. Most users of more addictive drugs, such as cocaine or heroin, started with marijuana, scientists say, and the earlier they started, the greater their risk of becoming addicted.

Many studies have documented a link between smoking marijuana and the later use of "harder" drugs such as heroin and cocaine, but that doesn't necessarily mean marijuana causes addiction to harder drugs. . . . says Harvard University psychiatrist Harrison Pope, director of the Biological Psychiatry Laboratory at Boston's McLean Hospital. "There's just no way scientifically to end that argument one way or the other." "I would bet you that people who start smoking marijuana earlier are more likely to get into using other drugs," Pope says. Perhaps people who are predisposed to using a variety of drugs start smoking marijuana earlier than others do, he says. Besides alcohol, often the first drug adolescents abuse, marijuana may simply be the most accessible and least scary choice for a novice susceptible to drug addiction, says Virginia Tech psychologist Bob Stephens. **No matter which side you take in the debate over whether marijuana is a "gateway" to other illicit drugs, you can't argue with "indisputable data" showing that smoking pot affects neuropsychological functioning, such as hand-eye coordination, reaction time and memory, says Wesley Clarke, director of the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. . . .** In 2006, 11.7% of eighth-graders said they had used marijuana during the past year, compared with 6.2% of eighth-graders in 1991. Among 12th-graders, 31.5% said they had used marijuana in the previous year; in 1991, 23.9% said they had.

"You are at school, and your main job as an adolescent is to learn and memorize," NIDA director Nora Volkow says. But if you keep becoming intoxicated by smoking marijuana, she says, you'll fall further and further behind in your studies. "How are you going to catch up?"

In a study comparing heavy marijuana users with people who'd had minimal exposure to the drug, Pope found that the former had lower verbal IQ scores than the latter..... Research shows marijuana users are significantly less satisfied with the quality of their lives than non-users, a revelation "as telling as any very fancy story of molecules," Volkow says. **Yet, she says, "I think there is a general sense that marijuana is a relatively benign drug and does not produce addiction." Although over the past decade, "research clearly has provided unequivocal evidence that ... some people can become addicted to marijuana."** Stephens has conducted seven large treatment studies of marijuana dependence, or addiction. "There's never any shortage of people who meet this definition," says Stephens, who edited the 2006 book Cannabis Dependence. Pot as predecessor....Pope has studied heavy marijuana users..."We were able to show there is a clear withdrawal syndrome.".....Marijuana today is more potent and therefore more toxic than marijuana grown in the 1970s, Volkow says. Back then, she says, plants typically contained only 2% THC. Today, she says, marijuana plants typically contain 15% THC.

Source: http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2007-02-05-marijuana_x.htm

While still only "anecdotal" in nature, there is demonstrable crime associated with the distribution of marijuana. The articles below describe homicides and a burglary associated with in-door grows and dispensaries. The article documenting the burglary also furthers the suggestion that crimes associated with these establishments are still under reported.

Pot theft claimed in boy's shooting death

By Tami Abdollah and Richard Winton Times Staff Writers January 23, 2007

A Bellflower man who said he was growing marijuana to ease pain from liver cancer is in custody on suspicion of fatally shooting a 15-year-old boy who allegedly was trying to steal some of the plants with his older brother. Prosecutors will have to decide whether Jerry Cress acted in self-defense and was in reasonable fear for his life when he shot Jacob Walker with a small-caliber handgun shortly before daybreak Sunday, said Los Angeles County Sheriff's Homicide Capt. Ray Peavy..... In an unusual twist, the dead boy's brother, Duane Berry, 24, could be charged with murder because the shooting occurred during the alleged commission of a felony. Detectives said Jacob and his brother were attempting a burglary. Berry had recently been released from jail on a narcotics sales charge that is to go to trial next month. "The kids in neighborhood had learned the guy had pot plants on his property, and some had broken in before," Peavy said. "These two knew there was a pretty large quantity."..... Peavy said Cress told detectives he had liver cancer and "it appears he has been self-medicating for a period of time." In this diverse working-class neighborhood in Bellflower, near the border with Paramount, news of the shooting came as a shock. But the existence of the marijuana crop was well-known to many teenagers. Some who spoke to The Times said many people had attempted to raid the crop before.

Source:<http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/california/la-me-pot23jan23,1,7100043.story?coll=la-headlines-pe-california>

Police evaluating pot find in fatal home invasion, Son says marijuana was for medical use to combat pain

Friday, January 12, 2007

Pittsburg police said Thursday that they are cautiously weighing a claim that marijuana found in the home of a slain PC World senior editor was grown and used by his son for medical purposes. Four masked men burst into the Pittsburg home of Rex Farrance, 59, about 9 p.m. Tuesday, fatally shooting him and pistol-whipping his wife after demanding money, police said. No arrests have been made. Police summoned to the home on Argosy Court found a large quantity of marijuana and said the couple were involved in the possession and possible sale of drugs.....the couple's son said that he was growing the drug at the home for medical reasons. The motive for the incident was definitely robbery, and whether any drugs on the premises are related to the home invasion "feeds right back into the entire reason for exploring whether there's a nexus between the possession of a controlled substance and targeting that particular residence for residential robbery."

Source: <http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2007/01/12/BAGNQNHGD11.DTL>

Killings related to marijuana grow?

By MATTHIAS GAFNI and J.M. BROWN, Times-Herald staff writers

Article Launched: 01/26/2007 07:10:16 AM PST

A Glen Cove home where two men were shot to death last week contained hydroponics equipment and other material commonly used for growing marijuana....During a tour of the home... a reporter and photographer saw several large plant trays, ventilation systems and chemicals consistent with those used to cultivate marijuana..... Thursday's findings offered the first insight into other factors that could be linked to the killings of James Werder and Manuel Caldera, partners in an ice cream truck business....In interviews this week, loved ones denied the men were drug dealers, saying instead they were good men excited about selling ice cream to children from their hip-hop styled truck.....Werder, 35, and Caldera, 27, were found dead inside the home Jan. 17, where they had sustained multiple gunshot wounds. Police have made no arrests and will not say whether they have any leads.....In the garage, there were five large plant beds that each could hold 55 individual cultivation blocks, and the walls, including the garage door, were covered in inch-thick insulation. There also was a forced-air heater in the garage and a large exhaust tube to direct air to the outside through the roof. There were other pieces of hydroponics equipment and a weekly feeding chart attached to a wall. In a back bedroom, a large circular hole had been drilled into a wall so ventilation tubing could push heat directly into the room from a hallway furnace. The floor was littered with potting soil and plant leaves. In the hallway bathroom, there was more soil in the sink. Turley said none of the equipment or modifications to the home's heating system existed before he rented the house just over a year ago.....Turley said he did not know whether the slain men lived in the home, but said Molina - who always paid the \$1,650 monthly rent in cash - was not allowed to sub-lease the three-bedroom, two-bath house.

Source: http://www.timesheraldonline.com/ci_5093434

Claremont marijuana dispensary burglarized

By Will Bigham, Staff Writer / Article Launched: 01/28/2007 12:00:00 AM PST

CLAREMONT - Burglars stole nine marijuana plants after breaking into the city's medical marijuana dispensary, police discovered Friday morning. Police responded at about 7:45 a.m. to Claremont All-Natural Nutrition Aids Buyers Information Services in the 600 block of S. Indian Hill Boulevard, **after a city official driving past the location saw that a window had been broken.....**The controversial dispensary, which has battled City Hall since it opened in September without a business license, is now coming under closer scrutiny from city officials, **as one central fear - that the business would attract crime - appears to have been realized. "Potentially these dispensaries can serve as a crime magnet in a community," Councilman Corey Calaycay said.**

"Having a dispensary in town could put an additional burden on our police, and we already have needs for other public safety priorities in our community." Kruse conceded Saturday that his dispensary was an attraction for criminals, but he disputed the suggestion that it's more of a target than any other business.

Source: http://www.dailybulletin.com/news/ci_5104514

MARIJUANA FIND LINKED TO PIPE BOMB IN SAN BRUNO HOME

01/02/07 2:55 PST / SAN BRUNO (BCN)

San Mateo County narcotics investigators detonated a pipe bomb hidden under a San Bruno man's mattress Friday when they went to arrest him in connection with an elaborate indoor marijuana grow in a nearby rental property. San Bruno firefighters discovered the pot around 8:15 p.m. after responding to neighbors' reports of sparks coming from the roof of a home.....When firefighters went inside the home "they stumbled over a marijuana grow inside the house. The entire house had been converted into a marijuana operation," he said. Some 1,298 plants with a combined potential street value of more than \$1 million.....When narcotics task force investigators arrived at the home they found a high-velocity AK-47 and other weapons along with the pot. Nobody was at the home at the time, Capovilla said. But "it could have been really ugly for law enforcement going in," he said. "Somebody has fortified the place ... in a nice little neighborhood."After searching Seits' residence, investigators came across a pipe bomb, along with a police scanner, additional weapons, ammunition and stolen property. The pipe bomb was detonated after Seits' home and neighboring residences were evacuated, Capovilla said. The pot haul wasn't especially unusual, Capovilla said, adding that there is a fairly high demand for marijuana in California. In October and November the county's narcotics task force dealt with much larger finds in Daly City and San Bruno, each in yielding more than 3,000 square feet of marijuana, he said.

Source:

http://cbs5.com/localwire/localnews/bcn/2007/01/02/n/HeadlineNews/MARIJUANA-BOMB/resources_bcn_html

Death Of Marijuana Advocate Could Lead To Changes

[Rick Sallinger](#)(CBS4)

DENVER Police are still searching for a suspect in the murder of marijuana advocate Ken Gorman. He was shot to death at his Denver home Feb. 17 in what police think was a robbery.

Gorman grew pot in his home for himself and others. Just days before his murder, he spoke to CBS4 of the dangers. **"I've had a gun stuck to my head," Gorman said. "I've had people stabbed here, in my house, from people trying to get my marijuana."** Gorman called Colorado's amendment legalizing medical marijuana "a great, great law."....."You try your luck down on Colfax and get shot," May said. "Or, get your car hijacked for a \$20 bag." In response to the violence, medical marijuana dispensaries are now opening, like Cannabis Therapeutics Dispensary in Colorado Springs. Matt Schnur of Cannabis Therapeutics said they have bulletproof glass and a steel door for security. There is also an extensive camera system.....But **Colorado's Attorney General John Suthers believes such dispensaries may be exploiting the law. "This is the medical marijuana law being abused for purposes of wide scale marijuana distribution," Suthers said.**

Source: http://cbs4denver.com/topstories/local_story_056170238.html

As we have discussed in the past, trends in the United States appear to follow those from Canada. Canadian Law Enforcement began to report the increase on "in-door" grows some time ago. They have recently reported the involvement of organized crime in the larger growing operations. The articles below suggest that these trends are already in place within the United States, specifically in the State of California. D.E.A. agent Taylor opines in one of the articles that part of the attractiveness of Marijuana sales in California is due partly to "medical marijuana laws that have created a permissive attitude." I partially concur with this assessment. However, I would add into the equation the fact there are at least 355 known Marijuana dispensaries operating in California (CAL NORML website, up from 240 last summer) and these dispensaries are likely selling a couple of pounds of Marijuana each day. Someone has to be supplying the Marijuana to those dispensaries and I would suspect it is likely that a majority of the Marijuana produced in these indoor grows finds its way to a dispensary. The indoor grow business has turned into an industry of its own. Our representative to the local Drug Enforcement Team stated that in all but one of the indoor grow cases he has worked this year, the suspect has raised the defense that the marijuana was being cultivated for a dispensary. The articles below begin to describe the increase in indoor grows as well as the rise in level of sophistication. They also provide us with a glimpse of the involvement of organized crime in these activities.

Pot growing moves to Calif. Suburbs

Illegal marijuana growers turning hot real estate into hothouses

By John Ritter USA TODAY

LATHROP, Calif. — Rick Estrada didn't think it particularly odd that he never saw his next-door neighbor or that curtains were always drawn. On his block of new homes, everyone was a recent arrival. In fact, some homes still sit empty, owned by investors hoping to "flip" them at a profit. Never in his darkest dreams did Estrada think the two-story house a few feet from his contained an indoor marijuana-growing operation that authorities believe is the latest wrinkle in drug traffickers' efforts to hide their illegal business.....

Estrada watched on Jan. 12 as federal drug agents busted into the unoccupied, stucco-clad house, hauling out enough marijuana plants to fill a truck, along with high-intensity lights, fans and other indoor hydroponics growing equipment. Agents that day raided five other houses nearby in Lathrop and one in Tracy, both suburban cities full of commuters to San Francisco Bay Area jobs. **In August and September, 41 houses were busted in Elk Grove, Sacramento and Stockton. Gordon Taylor, a Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) special agent in Sacramento, says investigators believe the houses are linked to an organized crime syndicate based in San Francisco's Chinatown.** Taylor says. "Our theory is they're picking newer neighborhoods because of the relative anonymity.....**The prevalence of illegal marijuana cultivation in California — more plants are seized in the state annually than in any other — is due partly to "medical marijuana laws that have created a permissive attitude,"** Taylor says. **"Couple that with the fast profits that can be made and relatively lax penalties a person faces under California marijuana laws, and you're more or less inviting organized crime to enter the industry."** **Indoor pot seizures in California have skyrocketed, according to DEA figures, from 54,569 in 2004 to 196,000 last year, although it's unclear whether tougher enforcement or more growers is the reason. The Northern California suburban busts since August have netted 23,602 plants with an estimated \$94 million street value, the DEA says....**

What is new is the size and sheer audacity found in the suburbs. The operations followed a similar pattern....Growers paid up to \$750,000 for houses in new subdivisions, usually obtaining 100% financing and putting no money down. They gutted interiors and used every inch to grow pot, knocking down some walls and cutting holes in others to run water lines and ducts. They installed irrigation systems with timing devices and brought in water tanks, pumps, generators and power packs. They built scaffolding to raise plants 2 feet off the floor. To avoid suspicion from large power usage, growers bypassed a utility's electric meters and created their own circuit boxes. No one lived in the houses. After neighbors tipped off police last summer that garbage cans weren't being taken to the street on trash day, the growers started putting the cans out. They also hired gardeners to cut the lawn.....Feelings are mixed over whether their neighborhoods are now safe. "It still seems like a nice neighborhood," says Richard Johnson, who moved here a month ago. "It happened, they're gone, so hopefully it won't happen again." Samantha Malone says she's moving. "I have babies. I don't want to be around that," she says. "Who's to say it's all taken care of anyway, or it's not going to happen next month."

Source: <http://www.policeone.com/drug-interdiction-narcotics/articles/1210924/>

3 men found in marijuana cultivation house arrested

By The Associated Press

SOUTH LAKE TAHOE -- Three men were arrested after marijuana with a street value of more than \$800,000 was found at a South Lake Tahoe rental home...Acting on a tip by a property management company, police found about 200 plants and 10 pounds of dried marijuana Thursday.....Debettencourt was on federal probation after a conviction for growing marijuana in at least four residences in Sonoma County, South Lake Tahoe police said.

Police Sgt. Brian Williams said Debettencourt is a self-described caregiver and grower of marijuana for people with medical needs. Williams said the suspect was renting the home. A fourth suspect was being sought, police said.

Source: <http://www.dailybreeze.com/news/regstate/articles/5187496.html>

Police: Marijuana-Growing Operation Found In Roseville Home

ROSEVILLE, Calif. -- A house fire led to the discovery of an indoor marijuana-growing operation in a Roseville neighborhood Thursday morning, police officials said. Fire crews were called to a home.....to extinguish an electrical fire in the garage of the home.

Authorities said when firefighters went inside the home, they found evidence of an extensive marijuana-growing operation. "There may be several hundred plants inside the house along with a sophisticated growing system, including lighting, irrigation, timers and obviously, a bypassed electrical system.....**Police said the home had been modified in the same way as other homes with marijuana-growing operations discovered in Elk Grove, Stockton and other Northern California communities. The other homes were determined to be part of an organized ring based in the Bay Area.** Roseville police said they don't yet know if the Glenwood Circle home is tied to the Bay Area ring.

Source: <http://www.kcra.com/news/10785674/detail.html>

Marijuana growing operation discovered by firefighters

1/24/2007

Approximately 150 marijuana plants were confiscated from a house.....after firefighters responding to a call about a fire at the residence discovered an indoor growing operation.....An Eureka police officer reported seeing an electrical circuit breaker that was attached to the outside of the garage on fire as he drove by the residence....The owner of the residence was not at the house when firefighters arrived and entered the garage to contain the fire, at which time they discovered the growing operation.....In addition to the marijuana plants, which ranged in height from 8 to 10 inches tall, Sheriff's deputies also seized six 1,000-watt growing lights from the garage, as well as \$1,500 from inside the residence for possible asset seizure. The case remains under investigation and arrests are expected to follow

Source: <http://www.eurekareporter.com/ArticleDisplay.aspx?ArticleID=19757>

Marijuana-Growing Operation May Have Sparked Fire

OCEANSIDE, Calif. -- A pre-dawn fire Thursday was apparently sparked by an overload of electricity that may have been tapped illegally to power lighting for a suspected marijuana-growing operation, authorities said. Firefighters responding to the blaze,.....entered the home's garage and found a "very elaborate and well insulated indoor greenhouse and what appeared to be several hundred marijuana plants being cultivated under artificial lights..... Heavy smoke filled the garage, adding that that flames shot from a wall near an electrical panel and traveled up the wall and into the home's attic. The flames were knocked down within 15 minutes, but due to additions in the garage and thick insulation around the alleged plant-growing area, crews remained on scene until 2:30 a.m. extinguishing pockets of fire..... Paramedics treated a resident at the scene for smoke inhalation. The man was later airlifted to UCSD Medical Center for treatment, Lawrence said. A fire investigator determined the blaze originated in an area of the wall where the home's occupants illegally tapped into power lines feeding the residence, Lawrence said.

The fire caused about \$45,000 damage to the home's structure and contents, Lawrence said, adding that none of the suspected marijuana plants were burned. The Oceanside Police Department is investigating.

Source: <http://www.10news.com/news/10843399/detail.html>

Utility scam leads to pot

Nearly \$2 million in marijuana found in home with sophisticated electrical system

[Katherine Rosenberg](#) January 26, 2007

APPLE VALLEY - The numbers are about as staggering as the stench of marijuana was to investigators when they served a warrant at a local home. Realizing they were being ripped off to the tune of \$25,000, Southern California Edison employees requested the help of the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department in investigating a Riverside Drive home where the electrical system had been circumvented so that the residents were receiving free electricity....**When officials arrived they found more than a six- to eight-month-long utility scam - the home was filled with 571 marijuana plants with the potential to gross nearly \$2 million..... "It was really elaborate. I haven't seen one that good in years." Proctor also explained that there was roughly \$50,000 in cultivation equipment alone.** He said there was a processing room where seedlings matured and a grooming room where trimming took place. The three-car garage was converted into a "grove" where heat lamps and cooling systems were on timers, water was filtered and carbon dioxide was pumped into the room to promote growth. "These people knew what they were doing. It was a very nice set up. These weren't amateurs," Proctor said. But the sophisticated system was also very dangerous to the community. Proctor said that Edison officials told him the daily kilowatt hours going into the home were 670 percent more than the kilowatt hours in an average home with the air conditioner running. "It was so hot it's a wonder that the house didn't catch on fire, it was that bad.....

Source: <http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20070126/utility-scam-leads-to-pot>

California Agents Make \$6 Million Pot Bust

Updated: February 8th, 2007 11:36 AM EDT

A major indoor marijuana growing operation was raided in West Sacramento on Wednesday. Authorities said the operation was discovered inside a warehouse near a home on Jefferson Boulevard. Investigators said they received a tip about suspicious activity in the area and staked out the property. **The West Sacramento investigation also led police to four other locations in Oakland. Authorities said four homes were searched and about 1,500 pot plants were found with a street value of \$6 million.** Five men and one woman were arrested in Oakland. Authorities said the bust would not have been possible without a tip from a neighbor.

Source: <http://www.officer.com/article/article.jsp?siteSection=1&id=34813>

Crackdown on Oakland marijuana ring; six arrested

[Henry K. Lee, Chronicle Staff Writer](#) / Wednesday, February 7, 2007

OAKLAND -- State and local law-enforcement swooped in on several Oakland homes today, including one across the street from an elementary school, as part of a crackdown on a Northern California marijuana-growing ring that produced plants with a street value of \$6 million, authorities said.

A total of six people were arrested in Oakland and San Francisco.....Authorities seized 1,500 marijuana plants during raids of homes in Oakland and West Sacramento. Each plant had a high content of the active ingredient THC and was capable of producing a pound of the drug..... Investigators found that every room there had been converted to grow marijuana and seized 700 plants.....Authorities also found evidence of a marijuana-growing operation -- but no drugs -- at a home on the 1700 block of 11th Avenue in Oakland, Giorgi said. All six suspects were arrested on suspicion of conspiracy and cultivation of marijuana and were each being held in lieu of \$1 million at Yolo County Jail.

Source: <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2007/02/07/BAGE6O0L5K93.DTL>

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. -- Benjamin Martinez, 21, was arrested at this home Wednesday in south Bakersfield. Police said they found 144 mature, high-quality marijuana plants and 35 non-budding plants inside his home, which altogether police estimate have a street value of \$500,000. **Along with the plants, police seized three pounds of processed high-grade marijuana and \$12,200. Police also allegedly found Martinez in possession of a 9 mm Tec-9, a 9 mm Uzi pistol and a bullet restraint vest.** Police said he could face weapons charges for having these guns. Martinez had completely sealed the garage of the home that he rented three months ago and installed grow lights and a watering and feeding system, police said. Police called this a very sophisticated marijuana growing operation. Neighbors said that Martinez was quiet and that they very rarely saw him outside. The BPD could not get into how it learned about this operation, but said that it believe he intended to sell the marijuana

Source: <http://www.turnto23.com/news/10973724/detail.html>

Marigolds make way for marijuana in suburbia

By Patrik Jonsson | Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

CREEKWOOD DRIVE:Raids on 40 houses in 12 suburban Georgia counties over the past two weeks are one recent sign of what police say is a national trend in marijuana marketing: growing the illicit crop year-round indoors, using suburban homes as "grow-houses." Grow-houses – a spacious incarnation of the old grow-room – have proliferated.... as antidrug squads have chased growers off remote mountainsides and out of cornfields. In these basements, lights hum with thousands of watts across a sea of plants lodged in a hydroponics soup of nutrients. Upstairs, there's usually no furniture, police say, except a cot, a chair, and a rabbit-ear TV. "It's the most impressive thing I've seen in 20 years of law enforcement," says Lt. Jody Thomas of the Fayette County Drug Taskforce.....The trend also signals that "production is moving closer to consumption" – a path that leads straight to the suburbs, says Jon Gettman, editor of the Bulletin of Cannabis Reform in Lovettsville, Va., which promotes legalizing marijuana for medicinal use..... **Experts say it was only a matter of time before syndicates began applying basic black-market principles: higher potency and consistent yields equal more profit.....**Here's how it worked...A wealthy buyer tied to a group of Cuban nationals in Miami bought homes in the endless suburbs of metro Atlanta. So as not to raise suspicion, growers illegally cut into public utilities such as water and electricity. Fences would go up in the backyards, and basement windows would be blacked over.....

Harvested at 90-day intervals, the cured "buds" fetched as much as \$6,000 a pound in New York City, where most of the suburban Atlanta crop was shipped. Police say a single house could yield more than \$1 million in profit a year.....Growers may have had several reasons for setting up shop in subdivisions like Summit Chase here in Snellville. A key one, though, is the privacy ethos. Darrell Lamb, a local high schooler, says the smell of pot would "slap me across the face" as he and some friends shot arrows in the nearby woods. But he never called the police.....Pre-bust, the biggest gossip in the neighborhood was how the house at 2851 Creekwood fetched one of the highest sales prices in the subdivision, \$219,000. Post-bust, speculation centered on whether it would affect property values.

Source: <http://abcnews.go.com/US/CSM/story?id=2922922>

Hotline launched to combat marijuana grow ops

toronto.ctv.ca: In an effort to combat a rapidly increasing problem, Toronto police have launched a hotline for tipsters to report marijuana grow operations. **In 2003, police busted 140 grow ops across the GTA, but that number more than doubled last year to 287. Officers raided two more large operations in the region last week. Police say grow ops are a dangerous problem plaguing neighborhoods.** Now, they are asking the public to anonymously report any information on the drug activity so they can shut down the illegal operations. **Both police and members of the Chinese business community are trying to get the word out to residents of Asian descent in particular who may have information on those linked to the organized crimes.McTeague says electrical safety authorities who notice spikes in electricity use should be mandated to report it to police.** "We can pinpoint exactly where people are using unusual levels, high levels, unsafe levels, of electricity," he said. "Chances are there's probably marijuana grow operations." The hotline number is 416-808-3681. All information will be kept confidential and police won't ask for the caller's identity

Source:

http://toronto.ctv.ca/servlet/an/local/CTVNews/20070201/grow_op_hotline_070201/20070201?hub=TorontoHome

Grow Op Criminals Using Deadly Booby Traps to Foil Intruders

Friday November 24, 2006

The hazards found in that massive [marijuana apartment grow-op](#) on Thursday may have been mainly to building residents, a consequence of strained and overburdened electrical outlets that could easily have started a fire.....**Police say organized crime has planted roots in the industry and that's raised things to a whole new level.** And they warn those behind the illegal agriculture are getting increasingly nasty about protecting their investments. In addition to the usual pistols, cops have been confronted with caches of homemade bombs, machine guns and suspects wearing bulletproof vests or body armor. What the authorities are calling "pot pirates" often set booby traps to catch intruders. And some of them are both astounding and potentially lethal.....But not everything is relegated to lethal force. In one case a suspect in full police regalia turned up at a pot plantation, trying to rip off a competitor. "He was a pot pirate trying to come in and steal someone else's illegal contraband." Rae refuses to reveal how her people avoid the traps, but admits "there's always something new coming along.".....

They've shut down 450 different operations across Ontario so far this year and destroyed nearly 193,000 plants. The bottom line? If you suspect your neighbor is actually running a grow op, don't play amateur detective before you call the police. "If people have suspicions about it, don't go in and investigate, because you don't know what you're going to come across, but let our officers go in who are specially trained.
Source: http://www.citynews.ca/news/news_5562.aspx

Narcotics task force had a busy year

By BRAD SMITH

Daily News Staff Writer

Published: Wednesday, January 24, 2007 2:46 PM CST

SISKIYOU COUNTY — Last year proved to be a very busy one for the Siskiyou County-wide Interagency Narcotics Task Force and its agents.....“The numbers are going up. Everything is increasing with the exception of heroin. Humboldt County is having problems with heroin but not us. Not yet,” Dunwoody said. **According to Dunwoody, the task force, along with the SCSO’s marijuana eradication team, has seen the abuse of the Proposition 215 medical marijuana recommendations. “It’s unfortunate. It’s a problem that we’ll have until the state takes a stand on the medical marijuana law,” Dunwoody said. “There are people who take advantage of the law for financial reasons, not medical. When you can get more than \$3,000 for a pound of processed dope — I would call that a big incentive.”** Along with marijuana, methamphetamine is the county’s biggest drug problem.

Source:

<http://www.siskiyoudaily.com/articles/2007/01/24/news/doc45b7c473eef31199369502.txt>

20-Month-Old Child Discovered In Alleged Marijuana Grow-Op

Thursday March 15, 2007

It's becoming a far too common occurrence - marijuana grow-ops located in the middle of a neighborhood where no one suspected a thing. Now authorities have found two more of the alleged drug gardens....**Both homes are in Brampton and involve the combined seizure of nearly 250 plants and 95 pounds of freshly harvested pot, along with some cold cash. But the alleged pot find isn't what really disturbed the officers involved. One house contained something far more valuable and far more vulnerable - a 20-month-old child.....**The parents of the youngster were among four people arrested. It's the third time this week that officers have found kids in a place where danger is lurking.....The child is now in the custody of the Children's Aid Society. But Burnham wishes there was more that could be done to protect the innocent. "I'm appalled," she declares. "I wish there was a way that John Q. Public could spot these things faster."There have been far too many instances of children found in grow-op or drug producing homes in the GTA this year.

Here are just a few of them:

January 6th; Cops raid a home on London Road in Newmarket and find 350 pot plants in the basement and two kids, ages 10 and 12, living inside. Both are turned over to the Children's Aid Society (CAS) and two men are arrested.

January 23rd; A silent 911 call forces police to check out a home on Simonston Boulevard in Markham. Whoever made it will regret the unexplained hang-up. Authorities are surprised to find a grow-op on the premises. More than 100 plants were inside and so were a 10 and a 15-year-old. Both were turned over to the Children's Aid Society.

January 24th; York Police visit an address on Weldrick Road in Richmond Hill and find 450 pot plants, a lot of hydroponics equipment and two kids. One is 12 years old, the other only 11 months.

Source: http://www.citynews.ca/news/news_5562.aspx

As scrutiny has increased, some dispensaries have been exposed as mere money making enterprises despite the supposed restrictions of “non-profit” or “reasonable compensation”. Even these blatant manipulations of Prop 215 and SB420 are defended by the likes of the Americans for Safe Access and former Senator John Vasconcellos.

Marijuana clinics prompts U.S. crackdown

The Associated Press / Published: March 10, 2007

LOS ANGELES: U.S. drug agents trailed Sparky Rose as he drove a Porsche convertible to his medical marijuana clinic. Under California law, clinics are supposed to dispense marijuana only to seriously ill people, and clinic owners are to get only "reasonable compensation." But to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, the sports car suggested that **Rose might be pocketing big money from his purportedly nonprofit clinic.....According to court papers, an investigation found records showing \$2.3 million was deposited in a clinic bank account over eight months starting in December 2005, and Rose wrote himself weekly checks of \$9,600 (\$499,200 per yr).**

California was the first of 12 states to allow the sale of marijuana for medicinal purposes, and it is regarded as having the loosest regulations. Oversight is lax, and there are few specific guidelines for buyers and sellers of a drug still illegal under U.S. law.....Federal officials raided 11 Los Angeles-area dispensaries in one day in January, the largest such crackdown....DEA spokeswoman Sarah Pullen said authorities chose clinics that were making big money, had become hot spots for crime or were part of large franchises. **The raided clinics on average made \$20,000 in profits each day, she said.....**Police, clinic owners, activists and legislators — even the law's author — cannot say for sure how much money clinic owners can legally earn. "A profit is in the eye of the beholder," said Joseph David Elford, a lawyer for Americans for Safe Access, a medicinal marijuana advocacy group. **Elford said a hands-off government approach to the clinics should boost competition, keeping marijuana prices affordable for those who need it and forcing owners to limit profits. Pullen said that has not happened.** The author of the 2003 law, then-state **Sen. John Vasconcellos, has no problem with clinic owners earning hefty salaries as long as they provide help for ill people.....** "We're helping people who are sick and they have this fascist mentality against good health and pleasure," Vasconcellos said.....

Source: <http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/03/10/america/NA-GEN-US-Medical-Marijuana.php>

DEA targets marijuana providers

01.13.07/Tribune By Rone Tempest

Until federal drug agents arrested him earlier this month, Shon Squier was one of Hayward's most successful and generous young businessmen. Customers lined up outside his downtown storefront, particularly on Mondays, when he offered free samples to the first 50 visitors.....But Squier's success as a dynamic medical marijuana entrepreneur also was his downfall. **Federal drug agents raided his home and business, arresting Squier and his store manager, freezing bank accounts containing \$1.5 million and confiscating several expensive cars, motorcycles and \$200,000 in cash.** Medical marijuana advocates claim that the raid constitutes unfair, selective enforcement by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) of the estimated 170 medical marijuana dispensaries in the state, including 85 in the San Francisco Bay Area....

The federal drug agency...**contends that the amount of money involved proves that the medical marijuana trade is high-stakes drug dealing, complete with the same high-rolling lifestyles.** "These people will tell you they are just interested in the terminally ill," said Gordon Taylor, DEA special agent in charge of the California eastern federal district, "but what they are really interested in is lining their pockets with illegal drug money.....With the proliferation of medical marijuana dispensaries of all sizes across the state, the DEA and Internal Revenue Service recently have concentrated their investigations on young, high-profile operators such as Squier, 34, and Luke Scarmazzo, 26, co-owner of a Modesto dispensary. Scarmazzo got the DEA's attention by producing a rap video that showed him counting stacks of \$100 bills, blowing billows of smoke at the camera and flipping off federal agents.....**between January and June of last year, Scarmazzo, who has a previous felony conviction, and his associates recorded \$3.4 million in sales of marijuana products with brand names that included "911," "AK47" and "Train Wreck."**.....

Source: <http://www.marijuana.com/420/drug-war-headline-news/51833-ca-dea-targets-marijuana-providers.html>

DEA raids 11 marijuana outlets

Agents seize drugs, guns and cash, prompting W. Hollywood protests. Twenty are detained, but no charges are filed.

By Tami Abdollah, Times Staff Writer / January 18, 2007

Federal agents Wednesday raided 11 medical marijuana outlets in Los Angeles County, seizing several thousand pounds of processed drug, hundreds of marijuana plants, an array of guns and bagfuls of cash. The simultaneous raids, part of an ongoing investigation by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, were the largest such operation in the county in recent memory.....The action by federal agents angered some local officials and was taken despite a state law permitting possession and cultivation of marijuana for qualified medical patients.....Sarah Pullen, spokeswoman for the DEA's Los Angeles field division, said agents seized large quantities of marijuana-laced edibles that included "anything from ice cream bars to lollipops to cookies to candies and candy bars.".....

West Hollywood officials said they were taken by surprise, only learning of the raids as they occurred. West Hollywood has a "long-standing commitment" to the use of medical marijuana for people with such catastrophic illnesses as HIV and AIDS, city spokeswoman Helen Goss said. **"We've been fighting to support the access of medicinal marijuana for many, many years and there's just a great disconnect between the federal government and communities like West Hollywood," Councilman Jeffrey Prang said.....**According to Pullen, neighboring businesses and residents had complained about a significant number of the dispensaries, and there had been increased reports of crime in the areas around the outlets. "Anyone in possession, selling or distributing marijuana is in violation of federal law and subject to prosecution," she said.....

Times staff writer Stuart Silverstein contributed to this report.

Source: <http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/california/la-me-marijuana18jan18,1,1468604.story?coll=la-headlines-pe-california&ctrack=1&cset=true>

Owner of Claremont marijuana dispensary fined

Associated Press

CLAREMONT, Calif. - City officials are fining the owner of a medical marijuana dispensary \$500 a day for staying open despite being found guilty last week of operating without a city-issued business license. The city is also seeking a court injunction to force Darrell Kruse to shut down the dispensary, City Manager Jeff Parker said. **If Kruse stays in business, his fine will work out to more than \$10,000 a month, which will be added to the city's general fund, Parker said. Kruse said he intends to stay in business as long as he can afford it.** "I was figuring they would find a way to tax it, and they have," Kruse said of the fines. State law permits possession and cultivation of marijuana for qualified medical patients. Kruse's business, Claremont All-Natural Nutrition Aids Buyers Information Services, or CANNABIS, opened in mid-September. The city subsequently passed a moratorium on medical marijuana dispensaries. The moratorium can run no longer than two years, and the city must at that time decide whether to allow and regulate dispensaries.

Information from: Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

Source:

http://www.mercurynews.com/mld/mercurynews/news/breaking_news/16491315.htm

Moratorium sought on new pot clinics

Bratton cites opening of 94 medical marijuana dispensaries in L.A. in a year and calls for rules to regulate the facilities.

By Patrick McGreevy, Times Staff Writer

January 16, 2007

State laws have been 'exploited and abused for both profit and recreational drug use.'

— L.A. Police Chief William J. Bratton

Concerned by a 2,350% increase in the number of medical marijuana dispensaries in Los Angeles in a one-year period, Police Chief William J. Bratton is calling for a moratorium on new facilities until strict rules can be adopted governing them. In a report to the Police Commission, Bratton said he wants to ban existing dispensaries within 1,000 feet of schools, churches, parks and places designated exclusively for the care of children.

He also advocates limiting their hours to 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.....**Bratton said the number of dispensaries increased from four in November 2005 to 98 a year later. "This has fostered an increase in ... crime problems and caused quality-of-life issues for families and communities, as evidenced by the 110 complaints received from neighbors, business owners and concerned citizens concerning these dispensaries,"** Bratton's report states. The Police Commission will consider his recommendations today. **Los Angeles Police Department officers have been called to clinics because of problems including robberies, burglaries and drug use in front of the clinics, Lt. Paul Vernon** said. Without regulations, he said, officers are hamstrung.

In the absence of specific zoning rules, 12 of the medical marijuana dispensaries in Los Angeles have opened within 1,000 feet of schools, Bratton said. **"One clinic blatantly resorted to placing fliers on the windshields of vehicles parked in and around Grant High School in an obvious effort to entice children," Bratton said.....**The clinics have proliferated elsewhere as well, although Los Angeles, as the state's largest city, has the most, said Joseph Elford of Americans for Safe Access, a group in support of the clinics. But San Francisco, with about 30 clinics, has more per capita, or about one per 25,400 residents, while Los Angeles has one dispensary for every 39,200 people. **On Monday, advocates for medical marijuana disputed that the dispensaries are magnets for crime, and expressed concerns that Los Angeles officials may reduce patients' access to the drug.....**the spirit and intent of this act has been exploited and abused for both profit and recreational drug use by many of the medical marijuana dispensaries in the city of Los Angeles," Bratton said.....

patrick.mcgreevy@latimes.com

Source: <http://www.latimes.com/news/print/edition/california/la-me-drugs16jan16,1,1958373.story?coll=la-headlines-pe-california>

Some Santa Cruz pot users, sellers find loopholes in state's medical marijuana laws

By Shanna McCord / Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — Half the calls to criminal defense attorney Ben Rice are people busted for growing, selling or using marijuana. Rice has developed a reputation for protecting the rights of those who buy and sell the drug under the 10-year-old state law that makes marijuana legal for sick people. **While most of those seeking Rice's services are legitimate medical marijuana patients or caregivers, he estimates 30 percent are not. These people aren't sick, he says, and are simply trying to hide behind the Compassionate Use Act for recreational or profit-making reasons.** "Absolutely, no question about it, some people do take advantage of the law," Rice said.....Authorities say they regularly see perfectly healthy people, some found with several pounds of marijuana, claim the drug is for a sick friend or relative. The problem, authorities say, is proving otherwise. **Ambiguities in the laws force police to let many people off scot-free because it's often difficult to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law, said sheriff's Sgt. Steve Carney, the head of the county's Marijuana Enforcement Team. Out of 10 people stopped on suspicion of marijuana crimes in the county, only two cases are sent to the District Attorney's Office on average, Carney said.....**

"The percentage we deal with that I believe are truly legitimate is 1 percent," Carney said....Prosecutors say cases like that of Edwin Hoey, which is now going through the local legal system, are an example of someone hiding behind the medical marijuana law for profit. **Hoey, a Santa Cruz man, was arrested in December when deputies found 100 pounds of marijuana at his residence during an investigation. His attorney, Rice, claimed Hoey was providing pot for local medical marijuana dispensaries. However, more than \$500,000 in cash and a French wine collection valued at \$150,000 found in Hoey's possession lead prosecutors to believe he was selling marijuana to make a big profit.** They say he sold pot to non-medicinal customers on the East Coast. Hoey has been charged with three counts of selling marijuana. "He was taking advantage of the medical marijuana law," **prosecutor Pamela Kato said. "This really is a case of greed. It's a travesty of the law"** Rice denies Kato's assertion, saying "the vast majority" of Hoey's marijuana was intended for people with a medical need.....The state Attorney General's Office agrees abuse of the medical marijuana system is widespread because the unclear laws leave plenty of room for cheating. "The medical marijuana law left a lot to be desired in terms of clarity," said Nathan Barankin, spokesman for the state Attorney General's Office. "There's more work to be done" Many in the legal community hope the ambiguities of the law will be sorted out in the courts. Several cases regarding medical marijuana are currently pending in the courts to help determine parameters for users and caregivers. Kato, the county prosecutor, said clearer rules would make her job easier and put more people behind bars. No other state medical marijuana-related bills are in the works at this time, however the deadline to propose legislation for this year is Feb. 23.

Source:

<http://www.santacruzsentinel.com/archive/2007/January/28/local/stories/02local.htm>

Just Say No to Marijuana Dispensaries in SCV

Commentary By Frank Ferry / Sunday January 28, 2007

Much has been written lately about the licensing of medical marijuana here in our community. As chair of the city of Santa Clarita's Blue Ribbon Task Force and an avid opponent of marijuana use and dispensaries, I feel compelled to share some facts and research with you, as well as some opinions I have as a parent and school administrator. First and foremost, you need to know that drug use, especially marijuana use, among teens doesn't just exist in the Santa Clarita Valley. It is rampant. Now, I know for some of you parents, this is not troubling to you. Heck, you used marijuana in your teens; you smoked and drank beer; you see it as a right of passage and you are not concerned. What you might not know is that the marijuana that is available to teens today is much stronger than the marijuana that was available in the 1960s or 1970s. Sometimes it is also laced with other, more potent drugs. **Marijuana is physically addictive. Each year, 100,000 teens are treated for marijuana dependence. Teens who smoke marijuana heavily experience many the same symptoms of withdrawal as users of nicotine. Between 1991 and 2001, the percentage of eighth graders nationally who used marijuana doubled from 1 in 10 to 1 in 5.** Kids are using marijuana at an earlier age. Research indicates that the earlier teens start using marijuana, the more likely they are to become dependent on this or other drugs later in life.

Of teens admitted for treatment for marijuana dependence, 56 percent had first used the drug by 14 years of age, and 26 percent had begun by 12 years of age (Kids and Marijuana). According to a National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA), marijuana was the most frequently used drug of choice by teens.....

This "slippery slope" is what concerns me. Those truly in need and eligible for medical marijuana in our community are a very small group compared with the large number of teens who may "slip through the system" and be able to obtain marijuana from a dispensary. **While you might say that "kids will get it anyway," I say, let's not be our kids drug dealer!**If you are interested in learning more about the Blue Ribbon Task Force or becoming a member, contact the city at (661) 255-4965. We welcome your support. Frank Ferry is a member of the Santa Clarita City Council. His column reflects the city's views, and not necessarily those of The Signal.

Source: http://www.the-signal.com/?module=displaystory&story_id=45924&format=html

Medicinal pot dispensaries under scrutiny

By Sandy Mazza Staff Writer

WHITTIER - Some arrived wearing hippie clothes and facial piercings; some wore suits; others were dressed in jeans and sweat shirts. The diverse group of people filled out paperwork as they sat silently inside a waiting room at the Holistic Clinic on Whittier Boulevard. All of them had come for one reason - to receive a physician's recommendation for medical marijuana. **For just two hours every Thursday evening, a doctor opens shop at the clinic, evaluating people seeking marijuana. They come with \$150 for the doctor's fee and an assortment of ailments - from cancer to AIDS to migraines, menstrual cramps and even sore muscles.** ...ambiguity has spawned a booming cottage industry of medical marijuana providers.....**Some police officials say abuse of medical marijuana is widespread and growing, and includes recreational users easily getting marijuana recommendations from profit-motivated physicians; dispensaries turning to illegal growers for supplies; and people selling their medical pot on the streets. Surveying this new landscape, Proposition 215 co-author the Rev. Scott Imler laments this is not what he envisioned when he helped write the measure on behalf of severely ill patients, he said. "When we wrote 215, we were selling it to the public as something for seriously ill people," said Imler, who opened the state's first marijuana dispensary, in West Hollywood. "It's turned into a joke. I think a lot of people have medicalized their recreational use.".....** Although some local police officials report seeing the state's marijuana laws being abused, they complain they are powerless to stop it.

"What's happening is that every pothead out there is pulling the wool over the public's eyes, paying a doctor for a recommendation," said Lt. Jim Bitetto of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. "The majority of people who go into those places are younger and don't appear to be ill at all. It's making a joke of the whole system." **Imler, too, believes that many dispensaries now buy marijuana illegally from drug dealers. While medical marijuana patients are allowed to grow up to 12 plants each under Proposition 215, most dispensaries have found it is cheaper and less labor-intensive to buy it, Imler said.**

As a result, patients who could truly benefit from marijuana are paying high prices for the drug, he said. "The sad thing is that, 10 years later, you still have to have \$80 to get marijuana if you have cancer or AIDS. Our program was a charitable program ... We were based on being off the black market." At the Holistic Clinic, Armando said many medical marijuana users get negative reactions from their families and friends, Armando said. **"People come in here afraid of being put into a database, afraid of their mothers, fathers knowing,"**

Source: http://www.sgvtribune.com/news/ci_5159040

While collecting information on this topic, I had an opportunity to view some interesting viewpoints proffered from those both in and outside of California as well as abroad. What they have to say about Marijuana's medical use and our current system is interesting reading. Even people who initially supported legalizing or providing marijuana for medicinal purposes are reexamining their position or at least calling into question the abuses of our current system.

England:

Cannabis: An apology

In 1997, this newspaper launched a campaign to decriminalize the drug. If only we had known then what we can reveal today... By Jonathan Owen

Published: 18 March 2007

Record numbers of teenagers are requiring drug treatment as a result of smoking skunk, the highly potent cannabis strain that is 25 times stronger than resin sold a decade ago. More than 22,000 people were treated last year for cannabis addiction - and almost half of those affected were under 18. With doctors and drugs experts warning that skunk can be as damaging as cocaine and heroin, leading to mental health problems and psychosis for thousands of teenagers, **The Independent on Sunday has today reversed its landmark campaign for cannabis use to be decriminalized.....**The decision comes as statistics from the NHS National Treatment Agency show that the number of young people in treatment almost doubled from about 5,000 in 2005 to 9,600 in 2006, and that 13,000 adults also needed treatment. The skunk smoked by the majority of young Britons bears no relation to traditional cannabis resin - with a 25-fold increase in the amount of the main psychoactive ingredient, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), typically found in the early 1990s.

New research being published in this week's Lancet will show how cannabis is more dangerous than LSD and ecstasy. Experts analyzed 20 substances for addictiveness, social harm and physical damage. The results will increase the pressure on the Government to have a full debate on drugs, and a new independent UK drug policy commission being launched next month will call for a rethink on the issue. The findings last night reignited the debate about cannabis use, with a growing number of specialists saying that the drug bears no relation to the substance most law-makers would recognize. **Professor Colin Blakemore, chief of the Medical Research Council, who backed our original campaign for cannabis to be decriminalized, has also changed his mind.**

He said: "The link between cannabis and psychosis is quite clear now; it wasn't 10 years ago." Many medical specialists agree that the debate has changed. Robin Murray, professor of psychiatry at London's Institute of Psychiatry, estimates that at least 25,000 of the 250,000 schizophrenics in the UK could have avoided the illness if they had not used cannabis. "The number of people taking cannabis may not be rising, but what people are taking is much more powerful, so there is a question of whether a few years on we may see more people getting ill as a consequence of that." "Society has seriously underestimated how dangerous cannabis really is," said Professor Neil McKeganey, from Glasgow University's Centre for Drug Misuse Research. "We could well see over the next 10 years increasing numbers of young people in serious difficulties."

Source: http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/health_medical/article2368994.ece

A British survey finds that half of all crime suspects and 57 percent of young offenders admit recent smoking of marijuana.

The Home Office, for the first time, questioned people who had just been arrested, the Daily Mail reported. The rate of marijuana use was significantly higher than expected. The government downgraded cannabis from a Class B to a Class C drug in 2004. "These alarming statistics raise serious questions about the consequences of the government's chaotic and confused policy on drugs," said David Davis, the Conservative Party's Shadow Home Secretary. "We have long said that drugs fuel all sorts of crime. This is because they both undermine a person's sense of responsibility but also because takers and addicts need money to feed their habit." While 57 percent of those arrested were identified as problem drinkers, far smaller percentages said they had used heroin or cocaine.

Source: http://www.playfuls.com/news_10_7742-Study-Links-Marijuana-To-Crime.html

Canada:

Speakers to talk about marijuana use

By STEPHANIE WADDELL

It might only be a joint, but territorial prevention consultant Sandy Bowlby wants Yukoners to know there are harmful effects that come with it. "It is a drug and it is addictive," Bowlby, a prevention consultant with the territory's prevention services department, said in an interview earlier this week. **New studies have indicated marijuana is physically addictive, heightens cancer rates and risks to mental health and impacts short-term memory, Bowlby said....**Over the past 15 years, cannabis use in the territory has risen from 16 per cent of Yukoners to 21 per cent....Meanwhile throughout the country, the study showed 14 per cent of Canadians smoke pot.

There seems to be a perception that pot is a safe drug, Bowlby said. Recent studies, however, have indicated it can be physically addictive. In the past, marijuana has been regarded as a drug that is not physically addictive. Research done in more recent years, Bowlby said, has shown heavy pot smokers who quit suffer from anxiety, sleeping problems and have shown anger issues while their bodies are getting rid of the drug. **It's also been found recently that when a marijuana user also smokes tobacco, his or her risk of cancer not only increases by a little bit, but multiplies.**

There are also ties linked to marijuana use and psychophrenia, not to mention the short-term memory loss that can have an impact on learning and everyday tasks such as driving, Bowlby said. The information, she said, has come from a number of studies done throughout North America. In recent years, it's also been learned marijuana has more THC (a chemical in pot) in it than it had in the past. "That will change what it does in someone's body," Bowlby said.

While Bowlby stressed pot may not be a gateway drug for everyone, it has been shown the younger a person starts smoking weed, the more likely he or she is to become addicted to it or move on to other drugs.

Source: <http://www.whitehorsestar.com/auth.php?r=45899>

National:

In Their Words: What the Experts Say:

The American Academy of Ophthalmology:

"Based on reviews by the National Eye Institute (NEI) and the Institute of Medicine and on available scientific evidence, the Task Force on Complementary Therapies believes that no scientific evidence has been found that demonstrates increased benefits and/or diminished risks of marijuana use to treat glaucoma compared with the wide variety of pharmaceutical agents now available."

Complementary Therapy Assessment: Marijuana in the Treatment of Glaucoma, American Academy of Ophthalmology, May 2003

The American Medical Association:

"...AMA recommends that marijuana be retained in Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act...AMA believes that the NIH should use its resources and influence to support the development of a smoke-free inhaled delivery system for marijuana or delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) to reduce the health hazards associated with the combustion and inhalation of marijuana..."

Policy Statement H-95.952, American Medical Association, <http://www.ama-assn.org>

The National Multiple Sclerosis Society:

"Studies completed thus far have not provided convincing evidence that marijuana or its derivatives provide substantiated benefits for symptoms of MS."

The MS Information Sourcebook, Marijuana (Cannabis), National Multiple Sclerosis Society, September 18th, 2006

The Institute of Medicine (IOM):

"Because of the health risks associated with smoking, smoked marijuana should generally not be recommended for long-term medical use."

Marijuana and Medicine: Assessing the Science Base, Institute of Medicine, 1999

Source: http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/drugfact/factsht/medical_marijuana.html

Drug Violence: State Medical Marijuana Laws Creating More Confusion and Abuse

Posted Friday, March 02, 2007 12:13 PM

Today's New York Times [covers the latest murder](#) generated by the passage of State-based "medical" marijuana laws. For years, marijuana legalization groups have worked to bypass the [Supreme Court's decision](#), the [FDA's official Interagency Advisory](#), and Federal law regarding medical marijuana. Symbolic medical marijuana laws which have been passed in some U.S. states have given too many citizens the false impression that growing and distributing marijuana is safe and legal.....

"Since 1997, after the first medical marijuana law was passed in California, as many as 20 legal marijuana providers have been killed around the country, mostly in robberies..." ..Mr. Gorman's killing, legal experts say, has exposed the paradoxes and ambiguities about medical marijuana that most states have failed to grapple with. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, which administers the marijuana program, is not authorized, for example, to provide information about where the 1,100 patients who are certified under the program can obtain their drugs, according to the department's Web site..." Not only do these State laws create confusion, but they also foster abuse. As we've noted previously, **the co-founder of California's medical marijuana has lamented its passage stating that, "We created Prop. 215 so that patients would not have to deal with black market profiteers. But today it is all about the money. Most of the dispensaries operating in California are little more than dope dealers with store fronts."**

Source: http://pushingback.com/blogs/pushing_back/archive/2007/03/02/30603.aspx

Oregon

Medical marijuana abusers

[February 7th, 2007] In preparation for a state law enforcement conference last year, Portland Police Sgt. Pat Walsh called drug units across Oregon to ask what they were most worried about. The answer: medical marijuana. **"It's not Grandma with stomach cancer that we have a problem with," Walsh says—it's the scores of people using the law as a cover for slinging dope, giving those with a legitimate need a bad name.** So in the name of the legit growers in our Jan. 24 cover story, "Garden of Weedin'," we make medical marijuana abusers this week's Rogues .

Law-enforcement officials say once a medical marijuana card is issued, there's little oversight to make sure the right amount of pot is being grown and that all the nugs are going to patients. Portland police don't keep separate statistics on medical-marijuana cases, but estimate they investigated about 30 such cases last year. In one such case, residents of a home on Portland's North Terry Street had two medical marijuana cards, letting them legally grow 12 marijuana plants.

Source: <http://www.wweek.com/editorial/3313/8516/>

California

How does a person get a Medical Marijuana card? How did you get yours?

There are certain Doctors who specialize in prescribing Medical Marijuana or "Cannabis" (as they like to call it). They advertise in the LA Weekly and some are more legit than others. I have seen a CA Medical Marijuana card before but I do not have one and that is not what legally allows you to possess Marijuana for personal use. It is the Doctors prescription and you need that before you get any cards. **Most doctors don't care if you are "sick" or not. Besides, some of the legitimate reasons a person CAN be prescribed Medical Marijuana are as vague as, "Pain"**. So, the Doctors are trying to help sick people feel better AND they are trying to help healthy people feel better!.....I had to fill out normal Doctor's Office forms and write about how I needed Cannabis for whatever medical reason I chose (They were listed on the form in case I wanted to choose one on the spot). I chose pain because of my many sk8boarding injuries and proceeded to pay his secretary \$250.00 for a one year prescription for Medical Marijuana. I couldn't believe it.....

Then what did you do?

I made some calls and got this number - (213) ###-####. It only costs \$100.00. I called and made an appointment for the next week. **Before the next week could come a friend of mine text messaged me about a "Prescription Party" he was having where a Doctor would be signing prescriptions (for a fee of course)**. I showed up late and most people had gone home or drunk and smoked themselves into a stupor. **Lucky for me the Doctor was included in the drunk, smoked out portion of the partygoers. I managed to get away with paying him only \$50.00 and I got a prescription for Vicodins too! My point is - It is very cheap and easy to get a prescription now and no one seems to care that the majority of the people taking advantage of all this- aren't terminally ill.**

Why is it better than buying pot from the neighborhood pot dealer?

- #1) The best quality and variety in the world. There are over 100 "weed stores" from Long Beach to The Valley and the weather is right!
- #2) They accept credit. You can have no money in the bank and walk out of a weed store with an ounce of OG KUSH.
- #3) You can complain. If "Lil Smoker" down the street sells you a short 1/4, you're shit out of luck. But when the weed store shorts you, you can tell them and they will hook you up.
- #4) Less risk. Sure, these places get raided every once in a while but the customers are never arrested. At worst, you might get questioned for a short period of time, but who cares? If you are doing a drug deal at a gas station or something, that's sketchy. Or worse, sitting in the drug dealer's living room with an ounce in your pocket when he gets raided, you are going to jail.
- #5) Convenience. With so many stores and Internet access (www.canorml.org) You can find a good place, close to you that will be open when they say they are (a lot of places are open until midnight)!

Are most of the people shopping at the Medical Marijuana Clinics legitimately sick?
No. But, is anyone legitimately sick?

What is the best/worst thing about having a medical marijuana card?

The best thing is always having the best weed. The worst thing is spending all my money on always having the best weed.

Source:

http://www.laist.com/archives/2007/01/22/laist_interview_a_local_medical_marijuana_cardholder.php

SANTA CRUZ: OPINION: As We See It: Medical marijuana abuse?

March 12, 2007

Like Capt. Renault in the movie classic “Casablanca,” we were shocked — shocked! — to discover that some proprietors of medical marijuana clinics have pulled down millions of dollars, even as “nonprofit” clinics. We’re also shocked — shocked! — at reports that just maybe some people without a medical condition are picking up their pot at medical marijuana stores. Most people in California, including us, support the idea of those in need of relief from disease or from chemotherapy being provided with marijuana to take away pain. But we can’t understand what has led this state to adopt a system of distribution that is so easily corrupted.

The 1996 state initiative that allowed legal medical marijuana is such a badly conceived law that we think even pot smokers should have voted against it....

Former state Sen. John Vasconcellos has blasted the federal Drug Enforcement Agency for keeping an eye on medical marijuana clinics. He told The Associated Press recently: “We’re helping people who are sick and they have this fascist mentality against good health and pleasure” Actually, there’s more to this than “good health and pleasure,” and Vasconcellos should know better. For example, agents went into a Sacramento marijuana clinic and took away two loaded handguns and 60 pounds of processed marijuana. In Los Angeles, agents raided several clinics, and discovered that the average clinic had about \$20,000 in profits each day.

There were four dispensaries in Los Angeles in 2005; today, there are more than 100.... Los Angeles Police Chief William Bratton has actually gone on record saying that the outlet operators are more interested in big money than they are in providing a service to ill people. Police officers and narcotics agents found that the operator of another clinic in Los Angeles deposited \$2.3 million a bank account within eight months of starting business. We realize that some clinic operators are doing so out of concern for clients in need. Not every clinic is a problem. But it’s obvious — handguns, millions in bank accounts, Porsches, huge amounts of processes marijuana — that there’s some abuse going on here. Some might say that marijuana trafficking is a kind of victimless crime and that at least sick people are being served. But any time you have big money, handguns and suspicious involvement from people on the street, you know there’s a problem. Local cities and towns more and more are going to be looking at ways of keeping trouble out of certain areas.

After all, cities try to regulate the number of liquor stores and bars, just because abuse can happen. It's obvious that pot clinics need regulation as well. What we'd prefer seeing is putting marijuana prescriptions in the hands of doctors, and removing the potential for abuse in obviously under-regulated marijuana dispensaries.

Source:

<http://www.santacruzsentinel.com/archive/2007/March/12/edit/stories/01edit.htm>

Riding High

01.27.07|[Los Angeles Business Journal](#)|By Deborah Crowe

With little fanfare until this month, Los Angeles County has quietly become the country's capital of medical marijuana. In the last two years the number of marijuana dispensaries in the county has ballooned from a relative handful to more than 200, according to most estimates.....Many of them have opened in strip shopping centers, typically using such names as "compassionate caregivers" or "patient collectives" – names that seldom mention marijuana. **Even the Rev. Scott Imler, who co-authored the ballot initiative that legalized medical marijuana, thinks the industry that he inadvertently helped create has gotten out of control. "We created this beast that frankly the state and local governments have been too slow to regulate," Imler said. "We're a liberal state and everyone wants to bend over backwards to be compassionate and understanding and groovy. And they get taken advantage of."**A report presented to an Oakland oversight committee last fall estimates Californians consume between \$870 million and \$2 billion worth of medically related marijuana each year....

Mushrooming Industry

California was the first of 10 states to pass a medical marijuana law. But no other metropolitan area has nearly as many marijuana storefronts as Los Angeles. The Bay Area, for example, has about 70. Still, the medical marijuana industry got a slow start in California.....However, in 2001 a West Hollywood cooperative that was organized by Imler was raided by federal authorities and shut down.....As that case made its way through the courts, the California Legislature in 2003 passed SB 420, which recognized the right of patients and caregivers to associate collectively to cultivate medical marijuana. Subsequent court decisions expanded that protection to retail-style dispensaries. However, the industry remained stunted because of criminal cases such as Imler's. But in 2005, Imler's case was settled. He got one year's probation. Attorney John Duran, a councilman in West Hollywood who successfully defended Imler, said that once it was clear that Imler wouldn't be heading to prison, local entrepreneurs were emboldened to launch their own clinics – despite the threat of federal raids. **The dispensaries were aided by the lack of specific regulations covering these businesses within many jurisdictions of Los Angeles County, particularly in the city of L.A.** The county and many cities inside it scrambled to enact moratoriums to give them time to decide whether to regulate or ban the shops. At least eight cities now have moratoriums in place, while Torrance and Pasadena in the past year have banned clinics. In November, Los Angeles police officials began talking seriously about enacting a moratorium.

That set off a scramble by many to open shops to beat any decision – and led to the 45 shops that opened in the city. In all, the city of Los Angeles has 148 retail-like medical marijuana shops or home-delivery services. “Out of the chaos, that’s where the opportunists move in,” Duran said. Dispensary owners who contend they work hard to run a reputable operation take issue with the opportunist label, though several declined to talk to the Business Journal for this story. Under state law, in order to receive medical marijuana, patients must get a doctor to provide a written recommendation – nicknamed scripts, although they’re technically not prescriptions. The scripts also give the recipients the right to legally grow marijuana for medical purposes. For roughly \$70 to \$100, depending on the neighborhood, patients with a script can purchase one-eighth of an ounce of processed marijuana for personal use. Prices at dispensaries, sometimes known as cannabis clubs, tend to be equivalent to or slightly higher than pot available on the street, with clinic owners touting the greater safety and cleanliness of their facilities. *(While ASA and others complain about inflated dollar estimates for seizures, at \$70-\$100 per 1/8 ounce that is equivalent to \$8,960-\$12,800 per pound. As mentioned below they are purchasing at \$3,000-\$4,000 per pound which realizes a profit of \$4,960 to \$8,800 per pound.)*

Investigators contend that much of the marijuana sold by L.A. clinics comes from many of the same sources as what’s available on the street. It’s often imported from Canada and Mexico, Pullen said, in violation of California law that requires medical marijuana to be grown within the state. **A dispensary might pay \$3,000 to \$4,000 wholesale for a pound of marijuana then mark that amount up by as much as 100 percent, according to the DEA. But clinic owners such as Ed consider the DEA’s contentions ludicrous, at least for clinics that care about their clients.**

Taking Precautions

However, even some patient advocates admit larger dispensaries often turn to underground growers. The DEA also believes that clinic sales to people without scripts or under false pretenses are more widespread than the clinic community acknowledges. Ed said he drills his staff on state law and recommended codes of conduct promoted by patient advocacy group Americans for Safe Access. **Still, many law enforcement officials and community critics paint a sordid picture of the clinics as crime magnets that are often located too close to schools and parks and are too lax in screening clients. They also are apt to become targets of robberies and other crimes themselves because of their large caches of drugs and cash.**

Source: <http://www.marijuana.com/420/drug-war-headline-news/52099-ca-riding-high.html>

License to Chill

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: SMOKING MARIJUANA CAN BE HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH, UNLESS YOU LIVE IN CALIFORNIA AND SUFFER FROM ANOREXIA, ARTHRITIS, CANCER, CHRONIC PAIN OR ANY OTHER ILLNESSES By Michael Goldstein February 11, 2007

I'm not talking about Xanax or Prozac or Vicodin or their siblings. I have a "recommendation" (not a prescription, a recommendation) for pot. This puts me in a legally and socially problematic condition. The state of California says I can ingest marijuana for medicinal purposes, but the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration thinks I'm a criminal if I do.....In Los Angeles County a recommendation can be filled at more than 100 dispensaries, many of which have been raided by the DEA.....I was aware of these laws long before last summer but hadn't felt the urge to take advantage of them until someone stuck a flier under my windshield. It was from California Natural Pain Relief on Ventura Boulevard in Studio City, and it informed me, misspellings and all, that "Medical cannabis can be recommended for the care and treatment of Cancer, Chronic pain, arthritis, Migraines, Diabetes, Insomnia, Anxiety, Aids Nausea, Epilepsy, Lupus, Depression, Eating Disorders, Menopause, PMS, Asthma, etc." When I visited California Natural Pain Relief, the folks there directed me to a doctor at another office. Since I experience occasional but painful attacks of gout, a form of arthritis, as well as other foot and knee pain, I brought a load of medical records and a vial full of Vioxx that I had been too scared to take. **The doctor gave me a brief physical exam and a blood pressure test, discussed how marijuana could alleviate the pain and inflammation and wrote and signed an official-looking, green-trimmed recommendation. This included the doctor's signature, a photocopy of my driver's license and a key phrase: "approve of the use of cannabis for my patient." I paid \$150 cash.**

Armed with my license to chill, I drove back to Ventura Boulevard, smiled at the beefy bodyguard, strolled inside and handed the recommendation to the dispensary operator. There was a faintly agricultural scent in the air. Under a glass countertop were vials labeled Master Kush, Cotton Candy and OG Kush; also on display were variants of cannabis strains known as chronic and ganga. I forked over \$50 for an eighth of an ounce and received a small pipe as a new-patient gift..... *(\$50 for 1/8th equals \$6,400 per pound)*.....With edibles, I never knew how much THC I was actually putting into my system. One evening I ate half a brownie after dinner and couldn't get to sleep until 2 a.m. I felt anxious and dizzy. I got lost in the darkness, spinning in the corridor between the bedroom and the bathroom. At the movies I downed a My Kushbar (a concoction of dark chocolate, blueberries and crisp rice), and my wife had to poke me as I sat catatonically watching "Dreamgirls." I shook my head and handed her the car keys.....Marijuana did help calm my foot-pain problems. Also, my appreciation of everyday beauty was enhanced. At Balboa Park, the end-of-summer foliage and the grass, sky and late-afternoon pollution around the sun appeared in Technicolor sharpness. At the same time, I was anxious and confused. I hadn't taken so much pot in years. For six months (in the spirit of scientific inquiry) I consumed maybe one gram every two weeks; my previous marijuana purchases had been on the order of a quarter-ounce every two or three years through the usual friend-of-a-friend channels.

When I started smoking pot on the East Coast in the '70s, I remember the choices being basically Jamaican, Colombian and skunkweed. **Today the strains are dizzying in variety and power, and all are available at the dispensaries. It's a real business: The Los Angeles Journal for the Education of Medical Marijuana, a free monthly, lists doctors, collectives and lawyers and covers events such as the 2006 DOESHA Cup, a tasting event in which California marijuana growers compete. It's all a bit overwhelming for a boomer.....**Dispensaries are more like cash-and-carry package stores in states that control liquor sales.

Another party stopper: Sharing or reselling a patient's medical cannabis is illegal. Some dispensaries try to make it all seem like a party, though. They advertise with slogans such as "KushMart: Where It's 4:20 Always" (4:20 being shorthand for smoking pot or getting high—and, incidentally, the number of the 2003 state Senate bill). There's also a maybe-not-so-clever propensity for employing words such as "therapeutic" and "herbal" and "compassion"—so that the initials of dispensaries, including Therapeutic Health Care and Today's Holistic Caregivers, are THC. I found one outfit that doesn't mess with any of that: The Natural Relief Center in Canoga Park, which doesn't advertise and shuns windshield fliers. Owner Michael Levitt got into the business one year ago. "I was comfortably retired," he told me, "but my wife didn't like me around the house so much." What motivated him were myriad health problems, including diabetes and high blood pressure. "At 51 years old, it doesn't wear well to deal with street thugs to get medication. I thought I could help people and bring the game up as a businessman." He described his storefront as "a community spot." There's a hairdresser on one side and a newsstand on the other. In L.A., City Councilman Dennis Zine of the West Valley wants dispensaries to be located in industrial, commercial or business areas, "where they're not going to have an impact on young people." I'm all for that. (By the way, the City Council's Planning and Land Use Management Committee voted in January in favor of enacting a moratorium on new dispensaries until the city devises rules governing them.)

I learned a lot during my months as a medical marijuana user and came to three conclusions: My tolerance is low; pot should be legal as a pain reliever; the distribution system in place right now has room for improvement. But it's like Winston Churchill said about democracy—it's the worst form of government, except for all the others.

Source: <http://www.latimes.com/features/printedition/magazine/la-tm-marijuana06feb11,1,7379401.story?coll=la-headlines-magazine&ctrack=1&cset=true>