

Medical Marijuana or *Political Pot*?

An Outsider's Inside Scoop

Back in 2004, Montana became one of several states that voted “yes” on medical marijuana. In order to better understand what Montanans voted for, I’ll share some of the technical language used to get this initiative on the ballot.

The Montana Medical Marijuana Act, Initiative #148 states under *Definitions for Use*: “Debilitating medical conditions” means:

1. Cancer, glaucoma, or positive status for HIV, acquired immune deficiency syndrome, or the treatment of these conditions.
2. A chronic or debilitating disease or medical condition or its treatment that produces one or more of the following:
 - a. Wasting Syndrome
 - b. Severe or chronic pain
 - c. Severe nausea
 - d. Seizures, including epilepsy
 - e. Severe or persistent muscle spasms, including multiple sclerosis or Crohn’s disease
3. Any other medical condition or treatment for a medical condition adopted by the Department of Health and Human Services.

Initiative #148 also states that a *Written Certification* includes a qualifying patient’s medical records or a statement signed by a physician after a full assessment of the qualifying patient’s medical history and current medical condition made in a *bona fide* physician-patient relationship. It verifies that the qualifying patient has a debilitating medical condition and affirms that the potential benefits of the medical use of marijuana would likely outweigh the health risks for the qualifying patient.

Initiative #148 further mentions that a *Registry Identification Card* can be given to a minor with required paperwork and written statements from parents or legal guardians.

All in all, the 2004 Montana Medical Marijuana Act is a well-written document, including clear language for:

a) reporting changes in medical conditions; b) when and where not to use medical marijuana, including... operating, navigating or being in actual control of any motor vehicle, aircraft or motorboat, while under the influence of marijuana; and c) legal ramifications for unlawful growing, production, distribution and use of medical marijuana.

But after President Obama, late last year, allowed the practical application of its use in those states that approved that law, nobody had any idea what would happen next.



With every good intention and wise invention comes abuse, often in the way of deceit, dishonesty, misinterpretation and bending of rules. This is an apparent fact with regard to the aforementioned Initiative. I believe that the word *debilitating* is key here, since it can be interpreted as *devastating, incapacitating, unbearable, and to impair strength*. This has allowed a lot of potential patients to re-visit physicians and discuss that old nagging pain issue.

Besides the fair amount of people who qualify for all the right reasons, there are those who are desperate to get their hands on marijuana. And they know that explaining pain is medically indefinable—it is in the eye of the beholder. In Montana, during the last eight months, those in possession of a *legitimate* medical marijuana card have increased from about three thousand to around seventeen thousand!

Yes, hemp is a complex natural plant (*Cannabis Sativa*) with more than 400 different chemical compounds, 60 of which (called *cannabinoids*) are unique to marijuana. One of those cannabinoids is THC, a feel-good chemical that, inside the body, breaks-up in over 80 different metabolites before it is eliminated from the body. Once in the bloodstream, it quickly starts looking for cannabinoid receptors in the brain and central nervous system. These are believed to induce the

pain-relieving effects medical marijuana is used for. But as with any other medicinal herb, there is a time and a place for its use, and it may not be for everyone.

I have never used marijuana in my life, so I don't know the immediate feelings it provides, nor the long-term effects it may have for me. However before you inhale, swallow, inject, rub-on, or insert anything into your body, you owe it to yourself to be educated first, and to act second. Depending on its preparation and use, marijuana can have pain-relieving or mind-enhancing effects. A good caregiver should be able to explain to you which method is best for you, based on your current chronic health condition.

During my June 5th radio program, Jim Gingery (Executive Director of the Montana Medical Growers Association), Misty Carey (a Caregiver), Charlie Gaillard (South-Central Chapter Director of the MT Medical Growers Assoc.) and Richard (a patient/user) contributed to a panel discussion. Topics included the medical history and use of marijuana, methods of growing, different species and parts used, active medical components of the male and female plants, myths around marijuana, as well as the benefits of medical marijuana use versus the overall negative effects of (long-term) prescription pain medication on one's overall quality of life.

During my June 12th program, Jim was back, this time joined by Bozeman Mayor Jeff Krauss, and Chris Lindsey (a Criminal and Civil Attorney in Helena, specializing in medical cannabis issues). The discussion focused on zoning regarding growing marijuana plants, and the tremendous amount of work done by the Montana Medical Marijuana Work Group, which has been formed at the direction of The Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee. During their sessions, the twelve carefully selected participants (including Jim and Chris) have been reviewing the Medical Marijuana Act, Initiative #148 and have been developing recommendations for consideration by the legislative committee. These should be ready as early as July 1st.

Both men acknowledge that, based on the recent public outcry about the activities by roving Cannabis Caravans, negative public press, criminal activities against growers around the state, the import of black-market marijuana from out-of-state, the questionable past of many dispensary operators, and the sudden explosive increase in registered card-holders, their recommendations will be extremely important for the correct future use of medical marijuana for all parties involved (i.e., doctors, law officials, growers, caregivers, licensed users, the media, as well as the public's perception and acceptance).



Jacobus is not a doctor and does not intend to diagnose, treat or cure any disorder. The information is based on self-study, interviewing experts on his weekly 3-hour Saturday morning Radio Program "Gesundheit! With Jacobus," which runs from 8-11 am, on AM 1450-KMMS and AM 1340 KPRK, and on feedback received from retail customers visiting his dietary supplements retail store Gesundheit! Nutrition Center at 2855 N. 19th Avenue, Suite N, in Bozeman (585-4668). If in doubt please visit a professional of your own choice and/or educate yourself with available published materials.

Historical use of *Cannabis Sativa* is well documented, and it is prudent to legally reinstate its beneficial uses to people who qualify. All should respect the upcoming definitive guidelines put forth by those in the know. There are other, all-natural, proven pain relievers available for those who have second thoughts, or for those who stretch the meaning of pain (as in *chronic* and *debilitating*). Let's not spoil it for those whose quality of life has only been improved by medical marijuana after all other avenues have failed. ■

GESUNDHEIT!
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