



Drug Free Australia series –
Media suppression of alarming cannabis harms

Episode 11 – its other harms

Long known

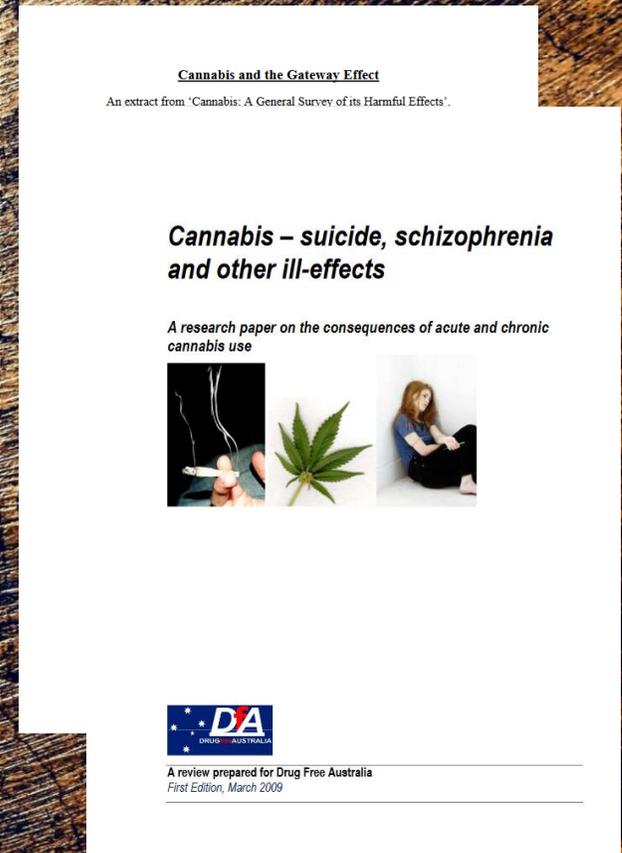
- **Cannabis the gateway to the illicit drugs**

- the pro-cannabis lobby argues it is no more a gateway drug than is alcohol or tobacco

“Tobacco and/or alcohol use in teenagers makes the use of other drugs more likely (Merrill et al, 1994) and the same is true of cannabis. A MORI poll in 1991 found that 50% of smokers had tried an illegal drug compared to only 2% of non-smokers and Califano (2003) concluded that young cigarette smokers were 14 times more likely to try pot.”

- Yet progress to illicit use is through four graded steps:

“1. Beer and wine 2. Cigarettes and spirits 3. Marijuana 4. Other illegal drugs (Kandel, 1989). The younger they started, the further they progressed and the more intense the abuse at any age the greater the risk of progression to the next stage. Of those who had used cannabis more than 1000 times, 90% moved on to other drugs.”

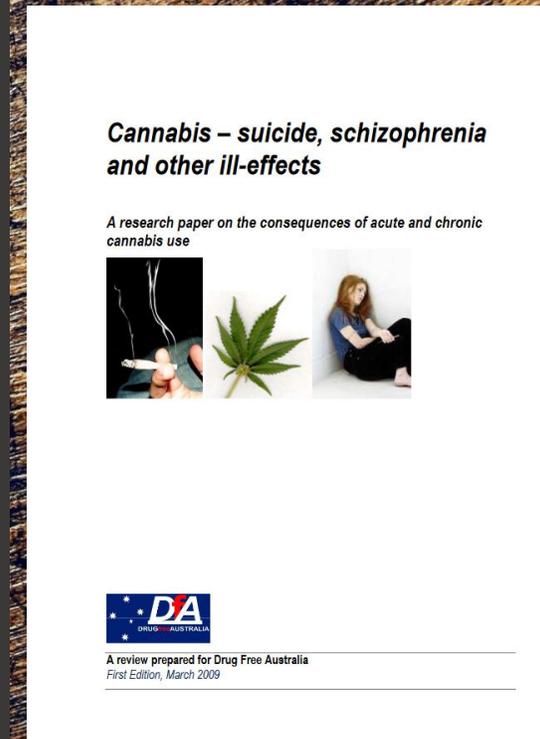


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https://d3sdr0llis3crb.cloudfront.net/images/pdf-files/library/Cannabis/Cannabis%20and%20the%20Gateway%20effect%20June%202019_.pdf

The science

- Also long-established by scientific studies:

- Cannabis users 50% more likely to develop **alcohol use disorder**
- Cannabis is associated with **Amotivational Syndrome**
- Brain Function
 - Verbal learning is adversely affected
 - Organisational skills are adversely affected
 - Cannabis causes loss of coordination
 - Associated memory loss can become permanent
 - Cannabis is associated with attention problems
- Miscarriage elevated with cannabis use
- Fertility adversely affected
- Newborns are adversely affected with appearance, weight, size, hormonal function, cognition and motor function adversely affected through to adulthood
- Cannabis is also associated with cardio-vascular stroke and heart attack, with chance of myocardial infarction 5 times higher after one joint



https://d3sdr0llis3crb.cloudfront.net/images/book-paper-pdf/DFA_CannabisPaper.pdf



Series summary

- Issues affect medicinal and recreational users
 - causal in twice as many cancers as tobacco
 - causal in almost every major birth defect (n=89) tracked in Europe
 - mostly no better than placebo medicinally
 - unacceptable dangers on our roads
 - significant psychosis burden
 - significant contributor to societal violence & homicide
 - significant suicide burden
 - many other harms
- and
 - it prematurely ages a 30 year old user by 30%



Last word

- In 2019 the Australian Seven TV Network's 60 Minutes surrogate "Sunday Night" ridiculed Drug Free Australia's analysis of medical cannabis

The opponents

Jenny's given away her cannabis oil to hundreds of grateful people. But as word spread, the authorities got wind. In April 2017, the police arrived.

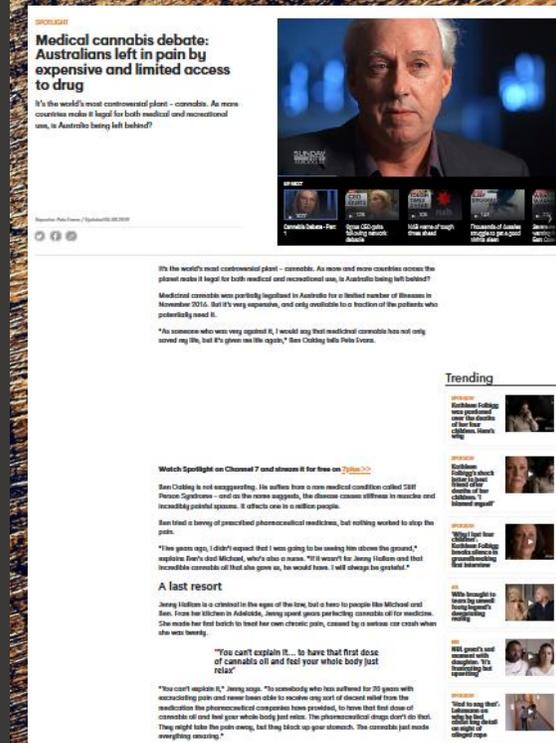
She wasn't concerned for herself at all. "I was so angry at them. All I kept thinking is, people are going to die. Kids are going to die. Who else can help them?"

Jenny pleaded guilty to drug charges and is awaiting sentencing. She faces up to nine years behind bars.

But Jenny's campaign to provide medicinal cannabis for all who need it is seen by anti-drug crusaders as a threat to society. Drug Free Australia's Gary Christian fears if Australia broadens access to medicinal cannabis, recreational users will fake illnesses just to get high.

"When you've got recreational users using medical cannabis as their pathway to entrench this drug within our community, I don't think Australians want that," Gary says.

He also believes the effects of cannabis are largely a placebo.



<https://7news.com.au/spotlight/medical-cannabis-debate-australians-left-in-pain-by-expensive-and-limited-access-to-drug-c-378990>



Last word

- E-mail sent in 2023 to “Sunday Night” producer

Stefan

“Perhaps 7 News might have an interest in this major review by the Journal of the American Medical Association addressing the phenomenon of medical cannabis being uniformly matched by placebo in pain control (although not as marked in the more biased studies), where about 70% of medical cannabis prescriptions are written for pain of one kind or another. However the same placebo effect may also be at play in a wide range of other conditions.”

- Placebo Response and Media Attention in Randomized Clinical Trials Assessing Cannabis-Based Therapies for Pain - A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis

