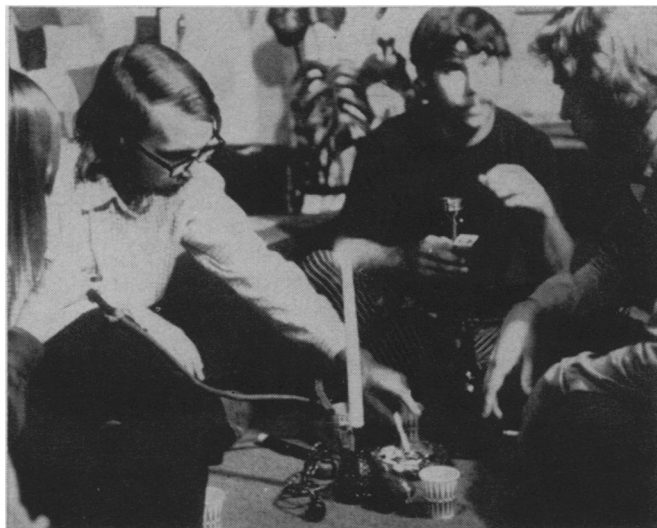


## The continuing battle over pot

**Psychiatrists link marijuana smoking to emotional disorders in adolescents and spark a controversy over their conclusions**



Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs

The battlelines are drawn. Pot proponents line up on one side with arguments that marijuana is less dangerous than alcohol and that its present illegal status serves only to alienate youth. Entrenched on the other side of the battlefield, the establishment counter attacks with scare-tactics from the 1930's—"Marijuana, the Assassin of Youth."

This week in Estes Park, Colo., the White House Conference on Youth voted to legalize the sale of grass (with restrictions). On the same day the JOURNAL of the AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (JAMA) published an article condemning the use of marijuana by the young.

**The authors** of the article, Drs. Harold Kolansky and William T. Moore, are practicing psychiatrists associated with the Child Analysis Division of the Philadelphia Association for Psychoanalysis. Having extensive consultative opportunities, they began to notice in 1965 that psychiatric problems among their patients often began shortly after the onset of marijuana smoking.

They instituted a study of this phenomenon and, during the past five years, have selected 38 patients for research. The group ranged in age from 13 to 24 and consisted of 20 male and 18 female patients. All displayed psychiatric disorders and had a history of pot or hash smoking. In order to establish a diagnosis, a patient was seen once or twice to determine history and to examine psychiatric status. The histories of children and adolescents were obtained from the parents. About one of four was tested by a clinical psychologist, and none was given a formal neurologic examination.

Most of the patients studied smoked marijuana two or more times weekly, two or more joints each time (an extremely heavy dose for anyone). Patients who indicated that they had used LSD, amphetamines or drugs other than

pot were not included in the study. Nor were patients with a history of or predisposition to psychosis. The results were alarming.

The patients consistently showed poor social judgment, poor attention span, poor concentration, confusion, anxiety, depression, apathy, passivity, indifference, and, often, slowed or slurred speech. They displayed paranoid suspicions of others and regression to a more infantile state. Sexual promiscuity was frequent and the incidence of unwanted pregnancies and venereal diseases was high. The psychiatrists state that these symptoms were largely absent prior to the use of marijuana.

The researchers also found that there was a marked indifference to personal cleanliness, grooming, study habits and work. In some smokers there was a clear-cut diagnosis of psychosis, and several were suicidal.

**Case studies** accompanying the report described suicide attempts, impotence, homosexuality and delusions. One patient believed he could communicate with animals, others believed themselves to be the Messiah, an Eastern Potentate of the Ku Klux Klan or the head of the Mafia. Most of these symptoms vanished after marijuana smoking stopped.

The researchers conclude that marijuana smoking is particularly harmful to the adolescent. It adds unnecessary anxieties to the already disturbing problems of physical and psychological maturation. The functions of the ego are disturbed and self-image becomes confused. Many young adults may tend to remain psychologically small children.

Adolescent overuse of marijuana, alcohol or any other similar drugs has never been advocated by any reputable person. Dr. Robert C. Petersen, chief of the Center for Studies of Narcotic and Drug Abuse at the National Institute of Mental Health, states that this

has been the center's position all along. NIMH studies in this area are still in progress, but Dr. Petersen says the results of pot smoking are never easy to predict, especially among adolescents. "People who do not have a fully developed ego should never get into the pot bag," he says.

**Dr. Richard C. Pillard**, associate professor of psychology at Boston University, has reviewed the JAMA article. He agrees that adolescents should not smoke grass, but he does take issue with the tone of the article. "Moore and Kolansky seem to have an ax to grind," he says. His first impression of their report was one of disappointment. "The lack of thoughtfulness and fairness left me unhappy. The polemical tone of the paper will cause it not to be well received, and will not advance the point of view of the authors."

Dr. Pillard believes that, due to lack of proper scientific controls, the report cannot be called true research. He, however, does believe that the clinical observations were fair and that the findings should be published. On the other hand, Dr. Solomon H. Snyder, professor of psychology and pharmacology at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, was quoted as saying, "I think they [Kolansky and Moore] and the AMA should be put in jail."

Unfortunately the findings cannot be accurately evaluated because no similar research on adolescents has been completed. "Hopefully," says Dr. Pillard, "people will not become over-emotional about this article and begin to pass unnecessary laws or make a political issue of it."

So, the battle over pot will continue. The general public, in the middle, will have to rely on the good judgment of all involved and hope that neither side is carried away by its own rhetoric. Perhaps the article immediately following the marijuana report in JAMA will give some hints. It is entitled, "The Misuses of Health Statistics." □