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Doctors: Marijuana Triggers Psychosis

Study Used Brain Scans For First Time To Show Link Between Pot And Paranoia

LONDON, May 1, 2007 | by Tucker Reals

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Robert Varela, a television cameraman, shoots a closeup of marijuana growing in a home in Diamond Bar, Calif., in this March 28, 2007 file photo. (AP Photo/Nick Ut)

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(AP) New findings on marijuana's damaging effect on the brain show the drug triggers temporary psychotic symptoms in some people, including hallucinations and paranoid delusions, doctors say.

British doctors took brain scans of 15 healthy volunteers given small doses of two of the active ingredients of cannabis, as well as a placebo.

One compound, cannabidiol, or CBD, made people more relaxed. But even small doses of another component, tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, produced temporary psychotic symptoms in people, including hallucinations and paranoid delusions, doctors said.

The results, to be presented at an international mental health conference in London on Tuesday and Wednesday, provides physical evidence of the drug's damaging influence on the human brain.

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"We've long suspected that cannabis is linked to psychoses, but we have never before had scans to show how the mechanism works," said Dr. Philip McGuire, a professor of psychiatry at King's College, London.

In analyzing MRI scans of the study's subjects, McGuire and his colleagues found that THC interfered with activity in the inferior frontal cortex, a region of the

brain associated with paranoia.

"THC is switching off that regulator," McGuire said, effectively unleashing the paranoia usually kept under control by the frontal cortex.

In another study being presented at the conference, a two-day gathering of mental health experts discussing the connections between cannabis and mental health, scientists found that marijuana worsens psychotic symptoms of schizophrenics.

Doctors at Yale University in the U.S. tested the impact of THC on 150 healthy volunteers and 13 people with stable schizophrenia. Nearly half of the healthy subjects experienced psychotic symptoms when given the drug.

While the doctors expected to see marijuana improve the conditions of their schizophrenic subjects — since their patients reported that the drug calmed them — they found that the reverse was true.

"I was surprised by the results," said Dr. Deepak Cyril D'Souza, an associate professor of psychiatry at Yale University's School of Medicine. "In practice, we found that cannabis is very bad for people with schizophrenia," he said.

While D'Souza had intended to study marijuana's impact on schizophrenics in more patients, the study was stopped prematurely because the impact was so pronounced that it would have been unethical to test it on more people with schizophrenia.

"One of the great puzzles is why people with schizophrenia keep taking the stuff when it makes the paranoia worse," said Dr. Robin Murray, a professor of psychiatry at King's College.

Experts theorized that schizophrenics may mistakenly judge the drug's pleasurable effects to outweigh any negatives.

Understanding how marijuana affects the brain may ultimately lead experts to a better understanding of mental health in general.

"We don't know the basis of paranoia or anxiety," said McGuire.

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"It is possible that we could use cannabis in controlled studies to understand psychoses better," he said. McGuire theorized that could one day lead to specific drugs targeting the responsible regions of the brain.

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I can't help but wonder if they've scanned the same way to figure out why a completely drunken person loses thier inhibitions and/or bodily functions or becomes psychotic/paranoid/violent. I've seen some pretty psychotic (drunken) foolishness and rage in my days. No mention of that though... Rarely will we see fair reporting with regards to the cannabis plant unless someone steps up to demand it. Then the DEA will just shoot you down turn it sideways and spit out more propaganda. Vicious cycle. The effects are admittedly temporary, whats the big news here?
KEEP OUT OF THE REACH OF CHILDREN

Posted by **responder47** at 5:07 PM : May 3, 2007
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itwasntme: indeed, people do have their choice as it stands now, but in the case of one of the choices, you can be arrested for possessing it. if pot were legal, it may not make a dent in the sales of alcohol. but then, it may. i would like for adults to have this legal choice.

Posted by **honestabe8** at 10:10 AM : May 2, 2007
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itwasntme: I would like to see Anheuser-Busch compete with home grown marijuana for the hearts and heads of the public.

Posted by **HonestAbe8** at 04:53 PM : May 01,

Its not really even competition. Even today people have their buzz of choice. some alachol some pot. And they do either one as they see fit. I hardly think it would hurt the sales of alachol anyway is my point.

Posted by **itwasntme000** at 9:52 AM : May 2, 2007
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pancb1111: i think we have already started down that slippery slope. i would prefer to let adults decide what they want to do to their bodies rather than the government, which is heavily invested in prohibition.

Posted by **honestabe8** at 8:15 AM : May 2, 2007
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Maybe people wouldn't be so paranoid if they didn't get arrested just for having a marijuana cigarette or a seed.

Prohibition doesn't work.

Marijuana has been illegal for over 70 years and look at it today...IT IS AMERICA'S #1 CASH CROP. Drug gangs and other dangerous criminals can do a lot of crime with billions of dollars. For the sake of public safety, LEGALIZE AND REGULATE MARIJUANA!

Here's how:

Law Enforcement Against Prohibition

<http://www.leap.cc>

Posted by **gunownerdan** at 7:29 AM : May 2, 2007
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I don't know why they don't prescribe it to anorexics, psych patients, cancer patients, people w/arthritis, etc, as it DOES have it's medicinal values. I'd rather hit a joint than eat the pills, that'll give me 15 other side effects. I should be on antipsychotics, sure...can I afford insurance? No. Can I afford the pills? No. Can I afford a bag from a "street pharmacist" to get me through a week? Yup, sure can, so that's where I'm at.

People have such a jaded view on it, and if you do your history, a lot of it had to do w/cotton farming. It was made illegal in 1937, by our federal government, because they decided they made more money from cotton. This was 70 years ago. I find it funny that alcohol prohibition only lasted from 1920-1933, 13 years, and has caused more deaths than marijuana.

Also, I prefer something that doesn't affect my gastrointestinal system for the next 6 weeks, thank you very much. (Not to mention, if you go ONE day w/out the pills, you're off kilter for the next THREE days).

If you disagree w/me, ok, but this is years of personal experience talking. Been there, done that, and I'm telling you, it ought to be prescribed. Yes, anyone would have to go through a period of regulation to get used to it, but that's no different from the psych drugs they give you, everything takes time. It's introducing a chemical into your body, and the body needs to adjust. No different than any other antipsychotic medication out there.

Posted by **kaustin81579** at 11:37 PM : May 1, 2007
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Sweet and Short if cigarettes and alcohol are legal then make pot legal and clear the national deficit you have built up duh!

Posted by **firebirdguns** at 11:18 PM : May 1, 2007
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God grows it, zillions smoke it, that settles it.....psychosis or not.
Now, where did I leave that fresh can of Pringle's.....?

Posted by **fonic8gw** at 9:48 PM : May 1, 2007
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They've also been pedalling that "pot is twice/three/a zillion times stronger now than in the 60s" line for at least 20 years. More "Reefer Madness" nonsense. Show me a pothead, and I'll show you someone the LEAST likely to be involved with violent crime or aggressive behavior.

Posted by **quatermass2** at 7:41 PM : May 1, 2007
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As with the Marinol caps given legally to cancer patients, the T.H.C. and other chemicals used in these tests are chemical derivatives extracted and artificially produced in a lab. Why can't the tests be done with natural herb taken the way it was meant to be taken? The Marinol caps are not as effective as the natural herb. This is just another smokescreen in another losing "war" that we have let ourselves believe we can win.

Posted by **taylpatr** at 6:20 PM : May 1, 2007
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