



Medical Marijuana Conference

by Kat Brady

The John A Burns School of Medicine Psychiatry Department hosted a conference on Medical Marijuana May 30-31, 2001. Organized by Dr. David Friar, the conference was primarily to educate physicians on the use of marijuana for medical conditions.

MDMA:

The Latest Drug Menace

by D. M. Topping

Both national and local media have recently featured front page and prime-time stories about the latest drug menace, commonly known as Ecstasy, E, MDMA, Adam, X, XTC, etc. Most of the articles have emphasized the purported dangers of the drug and the stepped-up efforts to suppress its distribution and use.

Seldom, if ever, is information provided that would help prevent harm to the millions of young experimental users. (One out of ten high-school students have reportedly used Ecstasy, and the numbers are growing.)

Many of the claims made in the news articles are large on sensationalism and short on factual information, which is readily available at several websites. In some cases, the reports make some outrageous claims, such as "semi-permanent memory loss" resulting from ingesting the drug.

When young people hear such claims, they are likely to tune them out, as well as valid warnings about the dangers. They

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The impressive line-up of speakers included: Dr. Lester Grinspoon of Harvard Medical School who spoke about his extensive research on this medicinal herb which, he pointed out, was part of the American medical pharmacopoeia until the 1940s;

Jonathan Weisglass, one of the lead attorneys in the Conant vs. McCaffrey case, spoke about the recent Supreme Court decision in the Oakland Cannabis Buyers Club case on the distribution of medical marijuana having no effect on state laws that permit the use of marijuana as medicine.

Dr. Donald Abrams, AIDS specialist at San Francisco General Hospital and a renown researcher, spoke of his long battle to get permission from the federal government to study the effects of marijuana in treating the AIDS wasting syndrome.

Many other experts, including Dr. William Wenner, a former DPFH board member, spoke during the day-long conference. Dr. Wenner reported that he had recommended medical marijuana to 127 patients at the time of the conference.

All the experts agreed that their patients and their studies showed smoked marijuana had a significant advantage over marinol in helping to reduce the symptoms of many ailments. *-pau*

Update

Medical Marijuana

by Jeff Crawford

To date, approximately 300 patients have registered with the Narcotics Enforcement Division (NED) to use Medical Marijuana. This is consistent with the rate of registration experienced in the first year of Oregon's MMJ program and slightly above our expectations.

To further facilitate the process of registration and educate patients and physicians about Hawai'i MMJ law, the DPFH will publish a comprehensive booklet in late September describing the law and addressing frequently asked questions. We will mail it to every physician in the state and offer it to patients at no charge. It will be available on our website shortly if you would like to take a look.

As Keith Kamita, the head of the NED, gains experience administering the law, he has fine-tuned a couple of practices that have important implications. For example, in the area of allowable amounts of MMJ, he now interprets the law to mean that a patient and primary caregiver (together) can possess 7 plants and/or 3 ounces of useable marijuana at any given time. This is probably the most liberal interpretation of the law's language that is possible and he is to be commended.

Mr. Kamita also reported that the Division is not issuing temporary registrations, as originally promised, because there has been little delay between receipt of registration applications and the

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My First Drug Policy Reform Conference

by Quinn Hoyer, Kailua-Kona

The Lindesmith Center Drug Policy Foundation's "Drug Policy for the New Millennium" Conference was recently held in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Since this was my first such conference, my expectations of the attendees were separated between a gaggle of drug use advocates raising their fists for easier access and those with negative, front-line drug policy exposure like social workers, drug treatment professionals, teachers and parents who can see the failure of the "Drug War."

What I actually found were intelligent, compassionate, involved members and leaders of their respective communities seeking intelligent and compassionate solutions to reduce the harm caused by substance abuse and to return to all Americans the freedoms taken from them in the name of the "War on Drugs."

On the sidewalk in front of the hotel, I was tickled at the unexpected presence of a handful of protesters waving anti-legalization, anti-reform signs. They were concerned about elitist solutions and, surprisingly, the damage to minority communities they expect "legalization" would cause. After chatting with them for several minutes, I respected their willingness to stand-up for what they believe is the truth, but felt discouraged at their regurgitation of drug war rhetoric and their inability to discriminate between harm caused by drug abuse and harm caused by the prohibition of certain drugs.

On the first full day, after accidentally showing up across the street in the Albuquerque Convention Center where there was a gathering of Federal officers and prosecutors (hmmm... coincidence?), I made my way over to the Hyatt for the Opening Remarks featuring Ethan Nadelmann, Executive Director of TLC-DPF. He spoke brilliantly on each day of the conference, but was exceptional during the Closing Session with his suggestion of an amendment to the Constitution that would guarantee each of us "sovereignty over our own minds and bodies." (A seemingly obvious fundamental liberty that should not require an explicit addition to a document that is an exclamation of that very concept.)

The poster boy of the conference was New Mexico's Governor Gary Johnson. I had to keep reminding myself that this was a Republican Governor I was listening to. He was so dead on with regard to issues surrounding the failure of the War on Drugs and strategies of Harm Reduction that I was forced to slightly revise my

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belief that 'all' politicians are weasels and whores. As I thoroughly dissected his speeches I found no undertones of hidden agendas, no double-speak that was intended to hide his real position (or lack thereof) and no dramatic sensationalism to gain voter support found in the dialogue of most politicians.

Just as Gov. Johnson succeeded in restoring some of my faith in politicians, the Reverend Edwin Sanders demonstrated that some Christian leaders could use Christ's teachings as examples of compassion and tolerance and not as justification for getting others who do not conform to their own morality thrown in jail. He also touched on a theme that was repeated by several of the minority leaders present, including a stirring speech by California Congresswoman Maxine Waters, on the lack of attendees that are,

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have heard such hyperbolic messages before, especially in the DARE program.

Since Ecstasy is getting so much attention, DPFH is planning to hold an educational forum on the topic this fall. Stay tuned for the time and place.

Meanwhile, for scientific and common sense information on Ecstasy, the following websites are recommended:
www.dancesafe.org; www.erowid.org;

without doubt, the most victimized by current drug policies: minorities. Rev. Sanders offered a rule from his own congregation, "You can come the first time for free, but if you want to come back you gotta bring a friend." The point here being that the friend you bring to the next drug policy event should be one of color. The value of this advice became clear when I realized that most minority leaders must believe that it is a disproportionate inclination by members of their own races to abuse drugs that drives them to support drug prohibition when, in fact, it's prohibition itself that leads to most of the social problems related to drugs in these communities.

The first plenary session, "Taking Stock: Victories For Drug Policy Reform," provided some very good reasons for being optimistic about the direction of reform efforts. The speakers enumerated such successes as the medical marijuana initiatives passed in several states, the seeming reversal of the Supreme Court's inclination to make "drug exceptions to the Bill of Rights," the number of Executive Clemencies granted by President Clinton to Drug War Prisoners, and the trend of the media to editorially endorse Drug Policy Reform. These victories came in the face of such hurdles as Congress passing and the President signing a bill that prevented the votes from Washington D.C.'s medical marijuana initiative from being counted. (It was later determined that it had passed 69-31%.

Some other highlights included a great effort by the William Moses Kuntsler Fund for Racial Justice to draw attention to Tulia, TX where 10% of the African-American community was arrested for cocaine trafficking on the word of a single white informer; a breakout session on the media, led by the widely published Robert Sharpe; and another on "Reform inside the Beltway," which featured Eric Sterling in a great video about hats. Though most of what I saw was overwhelmingly positive, there was still a pervading undercurrent of frustration that must come from working so hard to counter those that are simultaneously working to censor, oppress and incarcerate us for that effort. —pau

COMING EVENTS! MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Thursday, September 27 – 6:00-9:00p.m., McCoy Pavilion, Ala Moana Beach Park - Pau Hana Time with Chris Conrad, and live music by “The Cannabinoids”. Chris is one of the most active and knowledgeable people in the country on cannabis issues, having published books, designed the Hemp Museum of Amsterdam, and appeared on talk shows around the country. Parking is free; refreshments provided by DPFH. A donation of \$5.00 (upward) is requested.

Come join us, relax, listen to some cool jazz, and talk story about cannabis with Chris Conrad.

Saturday, September 29 – 8:30a.m.-1 p.m., Art Auditorium, UH Manoa Campus – “Shattered Lives: How Drug Laws and Prisons Hurt Hawai’i’s Families,” a half day conference featuring Chris Conrad and Mikki Norris co-authors of the award-winning *Shattered Lives: Portraits from America’s Drug War*.

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issuance of registration cards. Patients tell us that the average wait between submission of the paperwork and receipt of the registration card is two weeks.

The most serious problems that we hear about, however, relate to patients’ difficulties in finding a physician to certify their use of MMJ. Only a handful of physicians has certified patients for MMJ use, and two or three have certified the majority of patients who have registered.

This situation may improve, however, as physicians become more familiar with certification and registration procedures. In fact, it is possible that a national HMO with facilities in Hawaii may soon release its physicians to certify patients for MMJ use according to state law.

Overall, we are pleased with how things are going but are concerned that opponents will likely seek draconian changes to the law in the next legislative session. Stay tuned! *-pau*

Mikki and Chris’s efforts have given hope to many prisoners and their families by making “injustice visible” and played an important role in gaining clemency for some. They were recently awarded the Robert C. Randall Award in the Field of Citizen Action at the Lindsmith Center-Drug Policy Foundation’s 2001 conference. They will screen their compelling slide show based on their book to be followed by panels

featuring local activists, policy-makers, and families impacted by the drug war in Hawai’i. The conference will emphasize how concerned individuals can help.

There is a \$3 parking fee on campus and a small donation at the door is requested. Sponsored by DPFH, ACLU of Hawai’i, T.J. Mahoney’s, UH School of Social Work, Community Alliance on Prisons, Kako’o Ohana Pa’ahao. Call 533-3454.

LETTER FROM MCCC

(DPFH occasionally receives mail from inmates in Hawai’i prisons. A recent letter, received 7/14/01, included a short article submitted for publication in our newsletter.)

ISN’T IT TIME?

An issue that should prompt more concern from every citizen of the State of Hawai’i is the policy of spending millions of dollars irresponsibly to support the ineffectual practices of the Department of Public Safety. The discord between the procedures as currently administered and the lack of achievement of their purported objectives is borne out by volumes of accumulated evidence. What this huge pile of statistics indicates is the deplorable rates of recidivism. The cost to each member of our community is a burden that is unwanted as well as being unnecessary.

Yet this cost continues to grow and it rarely receives the attention warranted by the reckless abandon with which these bureaucrats are given free rein to disburse the public funds as they see fit.

‘The prison system stay all buss up, Cuz...’

As an inmate at MCCC I am confronted daily with the disastrous effects these policies have on all who come into contact with them. The truly sad part is the disproportionate percentage of those who are of Hawai’ian heritage bearing the brunt of these unfair and poorly conceived policies. The lack of concern by the officious leaders of this regime is a betrayal of the public’s interests. The steadfast refusal to address the nexus of the problem – **Drug Abuse** – is an unconscionable oversight at best. At worst, it smacks of willful negligence. The avoidance ritual when confronted with these significant issues is a learned behavior requiring immediate attention and remedies. It can be changed. It demands to be changed as it presents itself to each and every member of the most powerful group in our fair state: **The Tax-paying Public**.

‘Hey Bruddah, no make stink! You no like, no come jail.’

The about-face done by the honorable good ol’ boy Gov. Ben on the possibility of some reform is commendable. But when will it take place? Just one short year ago he vociferously lobbied for the construction of yet another human warehouse on the Big Island. A 1,500 bed medium security facility was almost ready to receive the ink on the dotted line when opposed by various factions.

His ‘new’ position is that we should view drug addiction as a disease, not as necessarily being a criminal act is an enlightened step. The institution of the Drug Court such as the new program on Maui is a significant concession to the dogmatic approach of condemning people afflicted with this terminal illness. What brought about this radical departure from the business as usual remains a mystery, we can only be thankful that the amount of suffering at the greedy hands of the Department of Public Safety will be substantially lessened. This will benefit all of those in each segment of the community. (Page S. Ronning, #A4005269, MCCC)

HAVE YOU EXPIRED???

As most of you are aware, DPFH depends on membership dues and contributions to cover the costs of this newsletter, announcements, flyers, and other such expenses. All office expenses are covered by personal funds of the officers, and funds for bringing in speakers from the mainland are provided through a grant from the Drug Policy Foundation. To keep the newsletter and other announcements coming, **we need your help. (Tel/Fax: 808-988-4386. E-mail: dmt@hawaii.rr.com)**

To save us the cost of sending out individual reminders, please check your mailing label for your membership expiration date, and take appropriate action. **Mahalo.**

YES! I WANT TO HELP D.P.F.H. PROMOTE DISCUSSION OF DRUG POLICIES!

Please accept my TAX-DEDUCTIBLE membership donation:

\$10 Student/Low Income or Gift Membership

\$35 Organization Membership

\$25 Regular Membership

Other _____

From the D.P.F.H.
Changes in current drug policies will not be advanced by elected officials or those with vested interests in maintaining them. The D.P.F.H. members believe that in an open debate, reason and truth will prevail. Your help is needed in making that happen.

MAHALO!

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