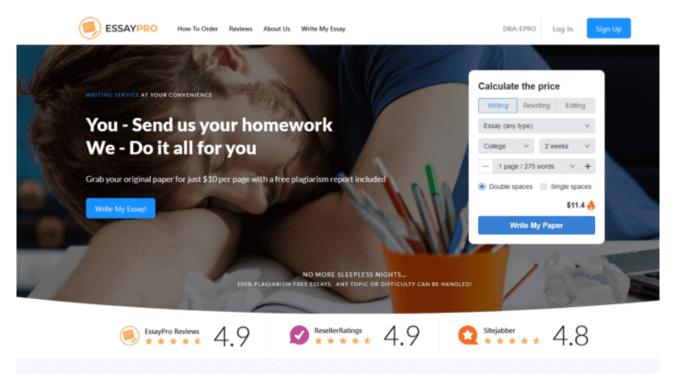
Physical, Emotional and Social Impairment Caused by Marijuana



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Marijuana is a unique and controversial drug. It is a popular psychoactive drug that is easily accessible and relatively inexpensive. Marijuana is often considered a recreational drug despite its illegal status. It is illegal because there are many uncertainties surrounding this substance. In fact, some favor the use of marijuana for medicinal purposes while others oppose. Opponents of marijuana insist that legal approval will result in serious personal and social problems.

There are three species of Marijuana. The most common and most psychoactive is a prepared mixture of the hemp plant, Cannabis sativa. Cannabis indica is known to be less potent and Cannabis ruderalis has virtually no psychoactive ingredients. Cannabis sativa will be analyzed in detail since it is the most commonly used species. This plant grows wild but it can be cultivated in temperate as well as tropical areas. Cannabis products can be smoked in pipes or cigarettes. They can also be ingested with food. Manufactured products range from paper to ink (WWW 2).

Every plant varies slightly in composition and the different parts of the plant vary in

chemical constituents. In 1993 researchers discovered 400 to 500 chemicals. Some of the major types of chemical constituents in marijuana preparations include acids, alcohols, aldehydes, and amino acids. Cannabinoids, esters, enzymes, glycoproteins, hydrocarbons, ketones, lactones, nitrogenous compounds, phenols, pigments, proteins, sugars, steroids, terpenes, and vitamins are others (Carroll 1993). These are among some of the naturally occurring chemicals in marijuana and were derived from the Institute of Medicine and the Marijuana Project from the University of Mississippi. Furthermore, researchers have found that when cannabis is burned, additional chemicals are formed and may be found in the gas and smoke. One of the chemicals produced is benzopyrene, which is a known carcinogen. It is approximately 70% more abundant in marijuana smoke than in tobacco smoke (Carroll 1993).

Only about 30 of the chemicals in marijuana have been studied extensively for their psychoactive effects. Of these delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is known to be the most psychoactive chemical. This chemical is converted into over 60 other psychoactive metabolites by the liver (Carroll 1993). These chemical reactions, however, have either proved insignificant or not enough research has been conducted to prove their importance. Researchers have been mostly concerned with the interaction of THC in the humanbody.

THC concentration in the human body depends on many factors. First of all, THC concentration varies throughout the plant.

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