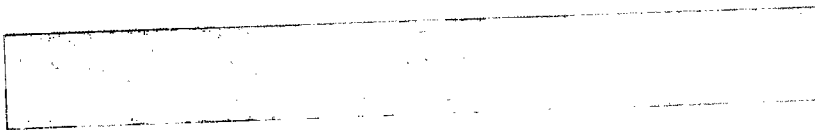


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Dear Senator Kitchel,

I would like to  
to your attention what  
my daughter who lives  
Colorado told me when  
visited over the holiday

With the legalization  
of marijuana there has  
a large influx of people  
moving into the state  
children's school is now  
overcrowded. The cost  
education has not  
offsetting any increase  
aid in the revenue tax



revenue marijuana law  
to education. Many  
new residents are

He also said that:

had to increase the  
public force costing  
than the revenue to

to them.

He voted for the  
passage of legalization

and now regrets

the reason for no

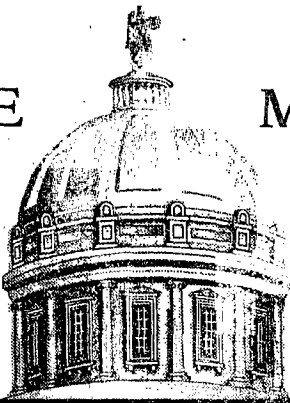
for it was the re

incerely,  
Gerrard M

THE BARRE

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TIMES



AND

Saturday, January 16, 2016

Established 1897

# Study gauges pot's he

By **JOSH O'GORMAN**  
VERMONT PRESS BUREAU

BURLINGTON — The Department of Health has issued a report on the potential health impacts of legal marijuana, and offers recommendations to mitigate some health risks.

The 84-page report examines the physical and mental health effects of marijuana and offers recommendations that touch on impaired driving, marijuana-infused edible products and use by teenagers.

"This is very important information that legislators need to have in mind as they make their decision whether to move forward, and more importantly, how to move forward," said Dr.

Harry Chen, commissioner of the Department of Health.

The study's authors began by looking at the medical literature available on the issue, then made decisions regarding the scientific rigor behind the literature to rank the studies on a scale ranging from "not well researched" to "very strong evidence."

"Not all data, not all information is the same and shouldn't be rated the same, and we have to do is evaluate the sources," Chen said, noting the illegal nature of marijuana impacted the quality of the studies available. "Some of the literature is not very strong that has to do with the fact marijuana has

# Marijuana does have effects

**L**egalization of recreational marijuana use would be to the definite detriment of Vermonters. The pending bill proposing to do so should be resolutely rejected.

It is a flawed perception that marijuana "just isn't that bad." Medical science has shown that there are multiple deleterious effects of marijuana, among which are the following:

— Marijuana use has been shown to be associated with the development of mental health illness including depression, anxiety and paranoia.

Obviously the drug causes alterations in the brain's neurochemistry when it results in the user's "high." Is

it then not surprising that there can be some long-term effects on mood and mental functioning?

— Marijuana has been shown to cause problems with memory. This impacts academic performance in students as well as work performance amongst those employed.

— Similarly, there is a well known detrimental effect on motivation caused by marijuana use, termed the "amotivational syndrome." Habitual marijuana users develop apathy and, again, school and work performance suffer.

— Marijuana causes psychological addiction. It is a "gateway drug." Users of marijuana are more likely to try even worse drugs in pursuit of getting "high." Do we want even more drug abuse in Vermont? We are experiencing, like most other states, an epidemic in opioid abuse. Why would we legalize something that is going to promote even more drug abuse?

— Marijuana use has been shown to impair the reflexes and skills necessary for the safe operation of a motor vehicle. Add to that apathy on the part of the driver and we will have even more motor vehicle accidents and deaths.

— Though not yet definitively shown to be the case, smoking marijuana will eventually be shown to be a cause of lung disease, including cancer, emphysema and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Anything delivered to the lungs via smoking is bound to cause lung damage which in turn leads to dysplasia

that is the precursor to cancer.

— Marijuana use stimulates appetite, the so-called "munchies." Do we want, as a state or a nation, more obesity to add to our current epidemic of obesity?

— There are well-known endocrine effects of marijuana. Specifically it interferes with the expression of testosterone, leading to gynecomastia (breast enlargement) and possibly testicular atrophy in males, heavy users being the most susceptible to these effects.

The mental, physical and cognitive deleterious effects of marijuana use are indisputable.

Paul  
**PARKER**  
Commentary

Anyone who argues to the contrary is in serious denial, or ignorant.

Arguments for legalization of recreational use of marijuana should not be confused with those for legalization of marijuana for medical uses. Research as to possible medical uses of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC — the active ingredient in marijuana) is ongoing but in its nascent period, though I believe that more needs to be done to promote delivery modes that don't include smoking it. Smoking marijuana is never a good idea for any reason.

Arguments that promote legalization of recreational marijuana use based on the current status of alcohol in our society are irrational. Alcohol abuse over the centuries has resulted in untold tragedies affecting individuals, families and entire societies. The list of ills associated with alcohol abuse is daunting: alcoholism, cirrhosis, drunk driving and other causes of accidental death, spousal and child abuse, rape, loss of worker productivity; the list goes on. I'm not advocating the return of Prohibition, a movement that clearly was untenable, but one cannot rationally argue that marijuana use should be legalized just because alcohol use is legal. Two bads don't make a good. Two wrongs don't make a right.

If recreational use of marijuana is legalized in Vermont, marijuana will be much more available to our youth. It is not difficult at all for youth to obtain cigarettes, chewing tobacco or alcohol when these are present in their households. It will be the same for marijuana. States where recreational marijuana use has been legalized are experiencing an alarming increase in toxic ingestions

amongst children and youth. This is typically in the form of "edibles." This will be an inevitable outcome for Vermont children and youth as well.

What message are we sending to our children? Do we want to send the message that smoking or ingesting marijuana is OK, when it clearly isn't? Isn't that, in essence, what our state would be communicating to them by passing a bill legitimizing and legalizing its use?

Though I am not well versed in the tax revenue figures proponents of legalization assert the state of Vermont will glean from passage of a legalization bill, I can attest that it will pale in comparison to the long-term cost to the state. The cost to the state of Vermont is hard to fathom when one considers the costs in future physical and mental health expenditures, loss of worker productivity, poor academic performance amongst students, or the cost of trying to contain more impaired drivers.

I personally don't know any medical professionals, substance abuse counselors or law enforcement agents who believe that it is a good idea to legalize recreational use of marijuana. To whom are legislators listening, then? Unfortunately our Legislature has a track record of not listening to the scientists and experts on scientific topics ranging from treatment of Lyme disease to the necessity of immunizing our children (though fortunately they finally got that one right). State legislators need to listen to the medical, mental health and law enforcement experts and not the marijuana legalization lobby. Given his track record, the fact that Gov. Shumlin supports legalization makes it even more suspect.

No matter how you cut it, whether it be considering safety of our children, safety of our roads, prevalence of drug abuse, general and mental health considerations, or long term fiscal repercussions, a bill legalizing recreational use of marijuana is a very bad idea for Vermonters. Only individuals who will produce and sell marijuana will benefit. The rest of Vermonters will suffer undesirable consequences.

*Paul Parker is a pediatrician in Richmond and former medical director at Woodside Juvenile Rehabilitation Center.*