

Have you ever heard someone say, I don't do drugs, well--'only marijuana.'

Earlier this year, a guy named Rudy Eugene attacked Ronald Poppo near a freeway and nearly killed the man by biting, chewing and nearly ripping off half of the older man's face. Police were called to the scene and shot the assailant to save the life of the vagrant, Poppo. Mr Poppo has survived albeit with hideous injuries and scars. There was ^{avid} speculation that the assailant must have been on Bath Salts or some ~~wild~~ ^{WYK} malevolent drug ^{or} in order to commit such a horrendous ~~act~~ ^{crime}. Then came the report from the lab: "Within the limits of current technology by both laboratories," the statement read, "marijuana is the only drug identified in the body of Mr. Rudy Eugene." It was 'only marijuana.'

A few months later, a mother named Catalina Clous was arrested in Phoenix after she drove away with her five week old son in a child safety seat on the roof of her vehicle. The baby fell into the middle of an intersection, and (miraculously I'd say), was found unharmed, ~~because still strapped into the seat~~. The woman was booked into jail on child abuse and aggravated assault charges. What caused her to forget her baby atop her car, and to arrive home before she knew the baby was missing! 'only marijuana.'

There is, or was, this myth that marijuana is a medicine, ^a benign drug, the panacea for every malady. It is time that some real scientific research is finally being done that exposes the truth about marijuana and the effects of chronic use.

Consensus exists that marijuana may be helpful in treating certain carefully defined medical conditions. An Institute of Medicine (IOM) review from 1999 concludes that marijuana may be modestly effective for pain relief, appetite stimulation for people with AIDS, and control of chemotherapy nausea and vomiting. Like most drugs however, it can have pernicious side effects.

Let's talk about the pernicious effects: the Marijuana that is commonly smoked today has much higher levels of THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol). THC is what hits the nervous system and thus what makes you 'high.' Studies show that prolonged use of marijuana is addictive. At lower doses the THC in marijuana can be sedating; in higher doses like those found into today's joints, studies show that 20-30% of users actually discover themselves getting more anxious.

Mood disorders like bi-polar depression showed a high correlation with chronic marijuana use. E.g., 'an Australian study that followed the outcomes of 1,601 students found that those who used marijuana at least once a week at ages 14-15 were twice as likely to develop depression seven years later as those who never smoked the substance—even after adjusting for other factors.

Many recent studies show that marijuana exacerbates psychotic symptoms and worsens outcomes for patients already diagnosed with schizophrenia or other ^{type} psychotic disorders. Using marijuana particularly in the early teenage years—can increase risk of developing psychosis." What should we do? I'll tell you what I think two weeks from now.

This has been Dan Price for Community Comment