Marijunia Essay, Research Paper

Marijuana is the common name given to any drug preparation from the hemp plant, Cannabis sativa. Various forms of this drug are known by different names throughout the world, such as kif in Morocco, dagga in South Africa, and ganja in India. In Western culture, cannabis preparations have acquired a variety of slang names, including grass, pot, tea, reefer, weed, and Mary Jane. Cannabis can be smoked, eaten in cakes, and drank in beverages. In Western cultures marijuana is prepared most often as a tobacco like mixture that is smoked in a pipe or rolled into a cigarette. One of the oldest known drugs, cannabis was acknowledged as early as 2700 BC, in a Chinese manuscript. Throughout the centuries it has been used both medicinally and as an intoxicant. The major psychoactive component of this drug, however, was not identified until the mid-1960s; this ingredient is tetrahydrocannabinol, commonly known as THC. At present, other cannabinoids have been isolated and their possible biochemical activities are being explored. Psychoactive compounds are found in all parts of the male and female plant, with the greatest concentration in the flowering tops. The content of these active compounds varies greatly from plant to plant, depending on genetic and environmental factors. Marijuana has its major physiological effects on the cardiovascular and central nervous systems; these effects are primarily sedative and hallucinogenic. Low doses psychologically produce a sense of well-being, relaxation, and sleepiness. Higher doses cause mild sensory distortions, altered time sense, loss of memory, balance, and difficulty concentrating. Even higher doses can result in feelings of depersonalization, severe anxiety and panic, and a toxic psychosis, along with hallucinations, delusions, and paranoia. Physiologically, the heart rate increases and blood vessels of the eye dilate, causing reddening. A feeling of tightness in the chest and a lack of coordination may occur. Research suggests that marijuana smoke may have a long-term harmful effect on the lungs.

The use of marijuana as an intoxicant in North America became a problem of public concern in the 1930s. In Canada, as well in the U.S., regulatory laws were passed in 1937, and criminal penalties were instituted for possession and sale of the botanical drug. In 1968 the possession and sale of THC, the psychoactive chemical component, was restricted to research. Despite these measures, marijuana continued to be widely used in succeeding decades as various groups sought to decriminalize its possession. A survey in the late 1970s indicated that at least 43 million Americans had tried the drug. In the 1980s, however, surveys of high school and college students showed that marijuana use was steadily declining. The number of high school seniors for instance, who had tried the drug decreased from 50.8 percent in 1979 to 33.1 percent in 1989. Conversely, cultivation of marijuana in the North America is increasing, accounting for 25 percent of the U.S. domestic market by 1990. Moreover, new growing practices have increased the potency of domestically produced marijuana five fold or more, causing concern among drug-abuse experts about adverse effects from higher THC doses. Medically, marijuana and THC preparations are sometimes used to treat glaucoma, because they help to reduce pressure within the eye. In 1985 the Food and Drug Administration also approved the use of synthetic THC (dronabinol) for treating the nausea and vomiting that can accompany cancer chemotherapy. It apparently acts by binding to opiate receptors in the medulla of the brain. Marijuana has changed today’s society for both useful and harmful ways. It can be used for medicinal purpures to further expand our growing knowledge of our selves. Or, it can be employed for violence, crime, and depression. Until every can utilize the positive aspects of Marijuana, it will not be accepted in any way.