

MYTHS OF MARIJUANA USE

THE MYTH – the risks associated with moderate consumption of drugs have been greatly exaggerated.

THE TRUTH – scientific research has shown that all types of narcotic drugs cause damage. This is particularly true for Marijuana, a drug that was previously regarded as “harmless”. All narcotic drugs are dependence producing, which means that a drug abuser does not retain control over his “moderate use” but continues his consumption even if it causes serious problems.

THE MYTH - it is wrong to prohibit and punish drug addiction or drug dependence.

THE TRUTH – drug control legalisation prohibits and punishes unauthorised handling and use of drugs, not drug addiction or dependence per se. Drug dependency is not a disease in itself but a craving for the intoxication effects of the drugs.

THE MYTH – when drugs are legalised, the crime rate will fall.

THE TRUTH – people do not commit crimes to steal, to get the money. They commit crimes because drugs affect their central nervous system. Also, a convicted drug abuser may, under certain circumstances, be surrendered for treatment. Such treatment may give the drug abuser a chance of staying drug free.

THE MYTH - a society has no right to prohibit its citizens from using drugs to influence their minds.

THE TRUTH – the United Nations’ International Drug Conventions permit only medical or scientific use of drugs. Other uses are not permitted. Science and health care have strict guidelines for the use of drugs in order to prevent drug-related damage.

THE MYTH – if drug abuse has harmful effects, this is only a self-damaging activity and the responsibility of the drug is of the user alone.

THE TRUTH – non-medical use of drugs carries consequences for other people, such as relatives, work-mates, etc. Welfare societies will always have to pay for the damage caused by drugs, such as illnesses, injuries, crimes, accidents and production losses.

THE MYTH – the prohibition of narcotic drugs has only made drugs more exciting, as in the case with all forbidden fruit.

THE TRUTH – narcotic drugs are considered “exciting” because they give pleasure effects, at least in the beginning, which short-circuit the pleasure centre of the brain. The abuser is prepared to attain these pleasures at almost any price. This is how drug dependence develops.

THE MYTH – the control of narcotic drugs has not worked out as planned. A “drug-free” society is not realistic.

THE TRUTH – drug control has been effective in keeping down non-medical use of drugs. A restrictive drug policy resulted in a drug abuse situation better than in countries without a restrictive drug policy.

Drug abuse is a public health problem. Drug use diminishes school performance and job stability. Moreover, frequent drug users often convince a previously non-drug-using sibling or friend to share in the pleasure of “partying”. Finally, there is an indescribable toll of depression and despair suffered by the non-drug using family members, adversely affecting their own performance at home, in their social network, and in the workplace. Legalisation, which is contrary to the public opinion in many countries, would be a simply and short-sighted legislative solution to an incredibly complex issue.

References:

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Spencer, W. R. (M.D.); "Marijuana: How much of a gamble?" Health EDCO, a division of WRS group inc. WACO: Texas, USA