

# IF EVERY AMERICAN ADULT SMOKED MARIJUANA AND NO AMERICANS SMOKED TOBACCO, 367,050 LIVES A YEAR WOULD BE SAVED

## I. HIGHLIGHTS:

Basis 1990 data, if 100% of U.S. adults (18 and over) smoked marijuana today and no one smoked tobacco, current smoking deaths in the U.S. from those two drugs would decrease from 372,369 per year to 5,319 per year, a decrease of 98.57% per annum.<sup>1</sup>

Drug	In 1990		
	Number of People in America Who Used the Drug in the Past Month (Millions) <sup>2</sup>	# of U.S. Deaths <sup>3</sup>	Estimated Annual Deaths per 100,000 Users <sup>5</sup>
1. Marijuana	11.0	296 <sup>4</sup>	2.7
2. Tobacco	65.5	400,000	610.7

<sup>1</sup> This assumes there would be no deaths in the future from past smoking of tobacco or marijuana. See section II. on the reverse side of this report for the hypothesis and calculations.

<sup>2</sup> 1990 figures from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) *Preliminary Estimates from the 1995 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse* (August 1996). Use is defined by source as use of any amount of each substance at least once in the past 30 days regardless of method of use.

<sup>3</sup> Death figures taken from "Marijuana's Contribution to Preventable Deaths in the U.S. in 1990" (report #3 last revised 1-29-98), published by Steven C. Markoff. Note the drug categories for death figures are similar to but not exactly the same as those listed in the source report. For example, figures for marijuana also include hashish, those for amphetamines include methamphetamine and speed; cocaine figures also include crack.

<sup>4</sup> Although, according to the Office of Applied Studies of SAMHSA there have been no recorded deaths due to an overdose of marijuana, Drs. McGinnis and Foege in their article "Actual Causes of Death in the United States" (*Journal of the American Medical Association*, Vol. 270, No.18, pp2207-2212) used a statistical analysis of published reports that attributed deaths to preventable contributors and found there to be 296 deaths involving marijuana or hashish indirectly (i.e. automobile accidents while under the influence, etc.).

<sup>5</sup> The numbers were obtained by dividing the number of annual U.S. deaths associated with each drug by the number of past month users of each drug in 1990 as reported in *Preliminary Estimates from the 1995 Household Survey on Drug Abuse* (August 1996) and multiplying the total by 100,000.

—Compiled & Published

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## II. REDUCING DEATH BY 98.57%:

### 1. Hypothesis:

- A. If all 61 million Americans that currently smoke tobacco stopped smoking, and if
- B. Simultaneously, 100% of the 187,747,000 Adult Americans that do not currently smoke marijuana, do so, and the 10,000,000 that smoke marijuana continue to do so (there were 197,747,000 adults in the U.S. at July 1, 1997 per the U.S. Census Bureau), then
- C. Annual deaths in America from smoking these two drugs would decrease from 372,369 per year to 5,319, a decrease of 367,050, or 98.57% (assuming there were no deaths in the future from past smoking of tobacco or marijuana).

### 2. Definition of Smokers:

- A. Cigarette smokers are defined as those having used any amount of tobacco (excluding smokeless tobacco) in the past 30 days regardless of method of use.
- B. Marijuana smokers are defined as those having used any amount of marijuana and/or hashish in the past 30 days regardless of the method of use.

### 3. Calculations:

- A. Smoking tobacco killed about 400,000 of its 65.5 million users in 1990, which means the tobacco "kill rate" was 0.61% of users per year (400,000 deaths + 65,500,000 users).  
If all 61 million current tobacco smokers stopped smoking, assuming the same 1990 kill rate of 0.61%, America would avoid 372,100 deaths per year (61 million current users x 0.61% tobacco kill rate).
- B. Marijuana killed about 296 of its 11 million users in 1990, which means the marijuana kill rate that year was 0.00269% of users per year (296 deaths + 11,000,000 users).  
If all 10 million current (the number of marijuana smokers has fallen by 1 million persons since 1990 per the "National Household Survey on Drug Abuse," SAMSHA, 1997) stopped smoking marijuana, assuming the same 1990 kill rate of 0.00269%, America would avoid 269 deaths per year (10 million current users x .00269% marijuana kill rate).
- C. If then 197,747,000 Americans 18 and older in 1997, both continued to or began smoking marijuana, the number of annual deaths from smoking marijuana would be 5,319 (197,747,000 x 0.00269%) deaths per year, basis the 1990 kill rate of marijuana, or 2.7 deaths for every 100,000 persons in the U.S..

### 4. Conclusions:

If all Americans who currently smoke tobacco stopped doing so, and all of the 197,747,000 adult Americans (18 and older) either began or continued to smoke marijuana, annual deaths from smoking would decrease from 372,369 (current marijuana plus current tobacco deaths) to 5,319 (marijuana deaths) or a decrease of 98.57% (5,319 estimated marijuana deaths + 372,369 deaths from tobacco and marijuana = 1.43% of current marijuana and tobacco deaths. Thus,  $100\% - 1.43\% = 98.57\%$  decrease in number of deaths)

## III. MARIJUANA CLARIFICATION

- 1. This report seeks to show the stark differences between the number of deaths caused by smoking cigarettes versus those caused by smoking marijuana.
- 2. The undersigned believes:
  - A. Marijuana is a more benign drug than is commonly thought.
  - B. Our government for a variety of public policy reasons should initiate serious scientific studies on marijuana to understand it, so they would have and could then issue accurate data on its properties, use and/or dangers.
  - C. Sick people should not be denied drugs, including marijuana, their physicians feel would most help them.
  - D. There is substantial anecdotal evidence that marijuana is a useful medicine, and is of low risk and toxicity, particularly in comparison to other accepted medications.