

MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested persons
FROM: Ben Morris
DATE: February 25, 2008
RE: American College of Physicians Endorses Medical Marijuana

Introduction

On February 15, the American College of Physicians (ACP) issued a 13-page position paper endorsing the use of marijuana for medical purposes.¹ The ACP is America's largest medical specialty organization and the second largest physician group in the United States. This group of 124,000 physicians, including specialists in treating cancer, heart disease and neurological diseases is calling for more research into marijuana's medical efficacy, the rescheduling of marijuana from a schedule I controlled substance² to a more appropriate listing, and exemption from federal criminal prosecution for physicians and patients using medical marijuana legally under state law.³

I have excerpted the key findings of the ACP's report immediately below.

Supporting Research into the Therapeutic Role of Marijuana (American College of Physicians):

- **Position 1:** ACP supports programs and funding for rigorous scientific evaluation of potential therapeutic benefits of medical marijuana and the publication of such findings.
- **Position 1a:** ACP supports increased research for conditions where the efficacy of marijuana has been established to determine optimal dosage and route of delivery.
- **Position 1b:** Medical marijuana research should not only focus on determining drug efficacy and safety but also determining efficacy in comparison other available treatments.
- **Position 2:** ACP encourages the use of non-smoked forms of THC that have proven therapeutic value.
- **Position 3:** ACP supports the current process for obtaining federal research-grade cannabis.
- **Position 4:** ACP urges review of marijuana status as a schedule I controlled substance and reclassification into a more appropriate schedule, given the scientific evidence regarding marijuana's safety and efficacy in some clinical conditions.
- **Position 5:** ACP strongly supports exemption from federal criminal prosecution, civil liability, or professional sanctioning, such as loss of licensure or credentialing for physicians who prescribe or dispense medical marijuana in accordance with state law. Similarly, ACP strongly urges protection from criminal or civil penalties for patients who use medical marijuana as permitted under state laws.

Conclusion

There is an emerging consensus within the medical community in regards to marijuana's medical efficacy and the need to rethink its schedule I status. The ACP's position paper is simply the most recent call for retooling the federal government's position on this issue.

¹ The paper is available online at http://www.acponline.org/acp_news/medmarinews.htm.

² See 21 U.S.C. 812(c).

³ 12 states have passed laws allowing for medical marijuana when recommended by a licensed physician.