



Issue: 'Medical Marijuana', a new panacea or simply Trojan Horse for the pro-pot lobby?

[*"Permissibility, availability and accessibility - all increase consumption."* Dalgarno Institute.]

Dalgarno institute was very recently approached by journalists asking for comment on 'medical marijuana'. The Executive Director agreed to the interview after asking if the article was going to be pro cannabis and being assured that, *"it is a commissioned piece by Al Jazeera, and we have been asked to get both sides of the issue."* On this basis the interview progressed.

After the good half an hour and much data being delivered, the journalists' conceded the position given was both informed and robust... *"I'm both concerned, but sadly unsurprised as to what happened to all the data given in the interview, what was delivered was almost absolutely ignored and a single 'patched together' quote given instead."* said Mr Varcoe of the Institute. *"Even significant numbers of follow up academic and research articles were sent to journalists, but seemingly completely ignored!"* Mr Varcoe concluded.

According to the Executive Director, what was touched on to various extents, and subsequently omitted from the article, was...

- The tragedy of illness and the need to find sound, evidence based therapeutic solutions to medical conditions. That individual testimonials of benefiting from unregulated cannabis aside, it was shameless of any pro-drug campaigner to attempt to use tragic illness as a vehicle to promote the 'legalising' of this psychotropic substance.
- The Dalgarno institute advised strongly that the term 'medical marijuana' be excised from the debate as it is a mere 'Trojan Horse' to unleash 'recreational' cannabis use into the wider community. This strategy has successfully played out in the United States, and clearly documented in the Pro-cannabis agenda.
- Dalgarno institute at the same time declared instead, that it is important that if there is any therapeutic benefit to constituents of cannabis such as THC or CBD, that these constituents be fully and thoroughly vetted via Therapeutic Goods & Administration testing to ensure best possible health outcomes. The Institute even advising the article's authors that Cannabis derived pharmaceuticals are already on the market (i.e. marinol and savitex). Many chemical 'discoveries' in the past have been hailed 'cure-all's' and 'miracles' only to have subsequent generations suffer from the negative side effects. Responsible health care and responsible government insist that proper testing and regulation be done to ensure maximum medicinal benefit whilst minimising harmful side effects to individuals and community.
- The Institute was asked and answered some of the questions from the following list. What Medicines....
 - Are smoked? = Zero
 - Come in unmeasured doses? = Zero
 - Have unknown strengths? = Zero
 - Taken as often as patient think needed? = Zero
 - Voted on by the public? = Zero
 - Circumvent safety of FDA New Drug Unit testing? = Zero
 - Contain no warnings of harm? = Zero
 - Medical examination NOT required = Zero
 - Allow some unnamed person to hold patients stash/medicine? = Zero

- The Institute also highlighted the disturbing emergences around the currently regulated opioid base therapies originally derived from opium poppies, and that those same prescribed, regulated opioids, are now killing extensively more people than the illegal version of heroin. Remembering this is a prescribed, yet dangerous substance.
- The journalist were also pointed to the fact that this unregulated 'medical' use of now illicit substances was an experiment 'run and done' in the 19th century. With cocaine and opium derivatives being widely distributed in unregulated markets causing the greatest dependency epidemic the USA has ever seen (per capita). In fact it was these outcomes, including the impact of Cannabis use that saw not only regulation introduced, but prohibitions instated.

Other comments were made, but the point was clear, cannabis is far from benign. This 'fair and balanced' article proved to land far from that target. Even the use of alcohol as a 'straw man' to somehow tacitly beatify cannabis as an alternative to booze is a logical incongruence, as the most significant reason alcohol does such damage is that it is legal and, therefore widely accessed and used. To quote the Head the National Institute on Drug Abuse in Bethesda, Nora Volkow in a recent Washington Post Article;

*"... it is not because they (alcohol and tobacco) are more dangerous or addictive. Not at all — they are less dangerous. It's because they are legal. . . . The legalization process generates a much greater exposure of people and hence of negative consequences that will emerge. And that's why I always say, 'Can we as a country afford to have a third legal drug? Can we?' We know the costs already on health care, we know the costs on accidents, on lost productivity. I let the numbers speak for themselves."*¹

We know that cannabis use has been implicated in some of the most horrific mass murders in recent US history and communities, rehab clinics and families are replete with stories of what both cannabis has done, and led individuals in to. Yet these 'testimonials' are not considered 'evidence' in a debate on legalising drugs. However, there seems no problem permitting such testimonials as evidence in the public discourse, when it comes to promoting the 'benefits' of cannabis use.

It is a fact that Australia's 200,000 dependent cannabis users (Prof Jan Copeland UNSW, 9/12/2012) represents a figure greater than the total of all problematic drug users in Sweden - 29,500 (Swedish Institute of Health, 2012). Primarily because Sweden has abandoned permissive drug policies and instead, empowered their communities to remain ostensibly drug free.

It would appear the old adage remains true, 'facts shouldn't be allowed to get in the way of a good story.'

To quote the last line of the article published... *"The smoke may never clear, but legal reform in Australia could give new meaning to Mardigrass. A taboo Protestival today could become a legitimate festival tomorrow. Only time will tell."*²

Yes indeed, time will tell; but what kind of story will emerge if a generations I.Q, health and future potential have all gone up in smoke? However, the question that really needs to be answered; will the promoters of this social experiment be held accountable for these outcomes when they inevitably present?

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References

1 http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/ruth-marcus-national-institute-on-drug-abuse-chief-attacks-myths-of-pot-smoking/2014/06/24/12010d84-fbd9-11e3-8176-f2c941cf35f1_story.html

2 <http://m.aljazeera.com/story/201462381558277256>

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