

**Forum:** World Health Assembly

**Issue:** Regulation, Production, and Industrialisation of Medicinal Marijuana

**Student Officers:** Pratham Khare and Melis Yilmaz

**Position:** Executive Board of World Health Assembly

## Introduction

Medical marijuana often referred to as cannabis or weed is a drug that utilizes the Marijuana plant or synthetic substances in it to treat illnesses or conditions (i.e. Alzheimer's Disease, PTSD, Chronic Pain, etc.). It's chemically a similar drug as recreational marijuana, yet it's consumed for medical purposes. The cannabis plant contains in excess of 100 distinct chemical substances called cannabinoids. Every one distinctively affects the body. Delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD) are the principal synthetic substances utilised in medication. THC likewise delivers the "high feeling" to individuals when they partake in smoking marijuana or eat food varieties containing the drug.

## Definition of key terms

**Marijuana:** cannabis, especially as smoked or consumed as a psychoactive (mind-altering) drug.

**Medical Marijuana:** marijuana as recommended by a doctor in the treatment of a medical condition.

**Recreational Marijuana:** any part of the cannabis plant, living or not, that is used as an intoxicant for the reason of enjoyment or pleasure.

## Timeline

The regulation, production, and industrialization of medicinal marijuana has been a complex and evolving process on a global stage, with different countries approaching the issue in unique ways.

A timeline of some of the key events and milestones in the history of medicinal marijuana:

- **1996:** California becomes the first U.S. state to legalize medical marijuana, setting the stage for other states to follow suit.
- **2000-2010:** A number of other U.S. states legalize medical marijuana, including Oregon, Alaska, and Colorado. At the same time, some countries in Europe, such as the Netherlands and Spain, also begin to allow the use of medical marijuana in limited circumstances.
- **2011-2015:** Uruguay becomes the first country to fully legalize marijuana, both for medical and recreational use. Canada also begins to explore the possibility of legalizing medical marijuana.
- **2016:** A number of U.S. states, including California, Massachusetts, and Nevada, vote to legalize recreational marijuana, further increasing the acceptance and accessibility of the drug.
- **2018:** The World Health Organization (WHO) releases a report recommending that marijuana be removed from Schedule IV of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, which categorizes it as having a high potential for abuse and no accepted medical use.
- **2019:** Canada becomes the second country in the world to fully legalize marijuana, with the launch of a regulated market for both medical and recreational use.
- **2020-2021:** The COVID-19 pandemic leads to a significant increase in the use of medicinal marijuana in many countries, as people seek alternative forms of treatment for anxiety, pain, and other symptoms.
- **2022:** The United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs votes to remove marijuana from Schedule IV of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, a significant step toward reclassifying the drug and recognizing its medical benefits.

Today, the regulation, production, and industrialization of medicinal marijuana continues to evolve and expand, with many countries around the world exploring new and innovative ways to utilize the drug in the medical field.

## Top 5 Major Parties Involved in the Regulation and Production of Medical Marijuana

### **1. United States of America**

USA is a major party in the regulation and the production of medical marijuana. North American market is the biggest shareholder of the medical marijuana with 55.6% captured of the global medical marijuana market. United States is also the leading producer of marijuana according to the UN's World Drug Report with 10.7 million lbs produced. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) views marijuana as a Schedule I drug, equivalent to heroin, LSD, and ecstasy, and prone to be mishandled and ailing in clinical worth. Hence, scientists need a special license to study marijuana. Therefore the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has only approved medical marijuana in the United States for the treatment of rare and severe forms of epilepsy, Dravet syndrome and Lennox-Gastaut syndrome. However every state has its own laws on the consumption of medical marijuana in the U.S.

### **2. Morocco**

Morocco is the world's second biggest producer of marijuana. Marijuana production has been developing in Morocco for quite a long time. In the mid 2000s, 70% of marijuana consumed in Europe was produced in Morocco. Marijuana is unlawful in Morocco since the country's independence in 1956. Production of marijuana has begun to turn out to be less condemned as no other harvests flourish in the mountainous Rif region. Likewise, the acknowledgment that marijuana makes up a huge wellspring of the economy has prompted banter for legitimising marijuana in Morocco. This makes Morocco a large producer but not the big consumer.

### **3. Afghanistan**

Afghanistan is the world's third biggest maker of marijuana. Marijuana has been cultivated in Afghanistan for centuries. The cannabis indica plant is native to South Asia. Afghanistan's marijuana production heritage brought about the nation turning into a well

known nonconformist objective during the 1970s. In 2010, the nation was the world's biggest marijuana provider. Tragically, marijuana cultivation in Afghanistan turned into a wellspring of income for the Taliban, with tariffs on opium trades turning into the pillar of its revenue.

#### **4. Mexico**

Mexico is fourth among the world's biggest marijuana production nations and has generally been among the biggest marijuana producers on the planet consistently. As a matter of fact, the word "marijuana " began in Mexico. Marijuana was introduced in Mexico by the the Spanish in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as hemp. Individual ownership of limited quantities of marijuana was decriminalised by Mexico in 2009 to diminish unlawful possession of marijuana, while clinical use for THC content under 1% was sanctioned in 2017.

#### **5. Colombia**

Colombia is consistently a large producer of marijuana, placing 5<sup>th</sup> in recent rankings among the biggest marijuana producing nations on the planet. Marijuana can be traced back to Colombia since the late colonial period, when hemp was cultivated for industry fibres. In 2012, the Colombian government formally decriminalised the possession of up to 20 grams of marijuana. In 2015, the Supreme Court of Colombia allowed for the cultivation up to 20 marijuana plants. While marijuana remains unlawful in Colombia for public consumption and trade, it was legitimised for clinical use in 2015 and rules have been laid out for dispensaries.

### **Industrialisation of Marijuana**

Over the recent years, marijuana has crawled out of the shadows of the stoner culture and arose as an extravagant industry that has flourished in areas including medical services, drugs, shopper products, and horticulture. Public companies with expanding valuations are hustling to be the most imaginative, while laid out blue-chip companies are cooperating or purchasing marijuana related organisations to get close enough to the business.

## Key Issues

### **1. No international recognised regulation**

Marijuana is still a controlled substance under international law and is classified as a Schedule I drug under the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. Despite this, there has been a growing trend towards legalization or decriminalization of marijuana in many countries and some states in the United States have legalized it for medicinal or recreational use.

However, the lack of a unified international regulation of marijuana has led to a patchwork of different laws and policies across different countries, which can create difficulties for individuals and businesses operating in the marijuana industry. This can also lead to challenges for law enforcement agencies in terms of cross-border drug trafficking and other issues related to the drug trade.

### **2. Large underground unregulated market and trade**

Despite the legalization or decriminalization of marijuana in some countries, there still remains a large underground market for the drug. This is because not everyone who wants to use or sell marijuana has access to legal channels, either because they live in a region where the drug is still prohibited or because they are unable to meet the strict criteria for legal use or sale.

The underground market for marijuana can also be driven by factors such as lower prices, greater availability, or a wider variety of strains and products.

This illegal market can also be associated with a range of negative consequences, including violence and organized crime, exposure to potentially harmful chemicals, and the sale of counterfeit or contaminated products.

As a result, efforts to legalize and regulate marijuana in a way that effectively addresses the underground market are ongoing, with some countries experimenting with different models for legalization and regulation. However, the development of a legal and regulated market for marijuana is a complex process that requires careful consideration of a wide range of social, legal, and health-related factors.

### **3. Failure of government funded research**

The lack of government-funded research on marijuana is a common issue that has been raised in discussions about the drug. This is largely due to the fact that marijuana remains classified as a Schedule I drug under the Controlled Substances Act in the United States, which restricts the ability of researchers to study the drug and obtain funding for their work.

As a result, much of the existing research on marijuana has been limited to observational studies or preclinical studies conducted in laboratory settings, which can provide valuable information but may not always accurately reflect the effects of the drug in real-world settings. This lack of robust, scientific evidence has made it difficult for policymakers to make informed decisions about the drug and for medical professionals to provide evidence-based recommendations to patients.

Despite these challenges, there has been a growing effort in recent years to increase funding for research on marijuana and to remove some of the barriers to scientific study of the drug. This has led to a growing body of research on the medical benefits and potential risks of marijuana, which can inform future discussions about the drug and help to guide policy decisions.

### **4. Corruption at ground level Dispensaries**

Corruption at ground-level dispensaries can be a problem in some areas where marijuana has been legalized or decriminalized. This can take the form of illegal activities such as tax evasion, money laundering, or the sale of marijuana to minors. It can also involve the sale of counterfeit or contaminated products, or the exploitation of employees or customers.

Such corruption can undermine the credibility of the legal marijuana industry and can also have negative consequences for public health and safety. It can also contribute to a perception that the legal marijuana industry is not well-regulated, which can make it more difficult to convince skeptical politicians and the public to support legalization efforts.

To address this issue, many jurisdictions have implemented strict regulations for marijuana dispensaries, including background checks for employees, mandatory testing of products, and robust reporting requirements. In addition, some countries have established specialized agencies to monitor and enforce these regulations, with the goal of preventing corruption and ensuring that the legal marijuana industry operates in a transparent and accountable manner.

However, enforcing these regulations can be a challenging task, and there is still much work to be done to ensure that the legal marijuana industry is free from corruption and operates in the best interests of public health and safety.

## **Possible solutions**

### **1. Intervention by a specialised international authority**

Marijuana's regulation, production and trade ought to be controlled at a global level, with participation between nations. A global level mediation in the unregulated trade would be more effective towards lessening the black market and safeguard economies against huge illicit exchange of cannabis.

The intervention of a specialised international authority to regulate the marijuana industry is a potential solution to the challenges faced by the current patchwork of national laws and policies. Such an authority could work to harmonize regulations and standards across

different countries, providing a more unified and consistent approach to the drug and helping to address issues such as cross-border drug trafficking, illegal trade, and other related problems.

However, the establishment of a specialized international authority would require significant political will and cooperation among countries, which can be difficult to achieve given the differing attitudes and opinions about marijuana. Additionally, there would need to be agreement on the scope and powers of such an authority, as well as the funding and resources needed to support its work.

Another challenge is the fact that marijuana remains classified as a Schedule 1 drug under international law, which would need to be changed in order for a specialized international authority to effectively regulate the drug. This would require a significant shift in global drug policy, which may take time and face resistance from some countries.

In conclusion, the idea of a specialized international authority to regulate the marijuana industry is a potentially promising solution, but it would require a significant effort and coordination to be realized. Nevertheless, it remains an important area of discussion and debate as countries continue to grapple with the challenges posed by the rapidly evolving landscape of marijuana legalisation and regulation.

## **2. Conducting Research**

Medical marijuana has yet to be fully understood by researcher. A global research group should be created to appropriately research marijuana and understand its clinical benefits and side effects. The group would better advise lawmakers to make appropriate decision in benefit to the public.

Conducting research on marijuana is important for advancing our understanding of the drug and its effects on health, society, and the environment. Research can provide valuable information that can inform policy decisions, guide medical treatment, and support public health initiatives.

However, conducting research on marijuana can be challenging due to its classification as a Schedule I drug under the Controlled Substances Act in the United States and its status as a controlled substance under international law. This restricts the ability of researchers to study the drug and can limit the amount of funding available for research.

### 3. Regulating Dispensary

Consumption of marijuana should be limited. Corruption at the ground level should be eliminated to regulate maximum consumption within the population. Dispensary should be automated and dispense appropriate amounts only.

Regulating dispensaries is an important aspect of managing the legal marijuana industry. Regulations help to ensure that marijuana is sold in a safe and controlled manner, prevent the sale of marijuana to minors, and reduce the risk of illegal activity and other negative consequences associated with the drug.

Regulations for dispensaries can vary from state to state and country to country, but common elements include:

- i. **Licensing:** Dispensaries must obtain a license from the relevant government agency in order to operate legally. This typically involves a background check for owners and employees, and compliance with local zoning and land use regulations.
- ii. **Testing:** All marijuana products must be tested for quality, potency, and safety before they can be sold. This helps to ensure that patients receive a safe and consistent product.
- iii. **Packaging and labeling:** Marijuana products must be packaged and labeled in a manner that meets specific standards and provides information about the product's potency, ingredients, and potential health effects.

- iv. Inventory tracking: Dispensaries must maintain detailed records of their inventory, including the origin and destination of all products, in order to prevent illegal activity and ensure compliance with regulations.
- v. Advertising: Advertising by dispensaries is typically subject to specific rules and restrictions in order to prevent the promotion of marijuana to minors or in a manner that is misleading or deceptive.

By implementing these and other regulations, governments can help to ensure that the legal marijuana industry operates in a safe, transparent, and responsible manner, while also reducing the risk of negative consequences associated with the drug.

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