

February 17, 1976

Doris H. Milman, M.D.  
Professor  
Department of Pediatrics  
SUNY Downstate Medical Center

Dear Dr. Milman:

All subjects with a chronic history of cannabis use were included in the sample. Both subjects and controls received the same inquiry and none of the users were excluded for neurological dysfunction. Exclusions were: over age 58 (4); concurrent heroin use (3), alcohol use (3); and amphetamine use (1).

In our neurological reviews, we had 4 subjects in the user group and 6 in the control group with abnormal EEG. Of both groups, head injury within 3 years was present in 2 users and 1 control, and in the users, these two were the only subjects with an asymmetric EEG record.

The study was undertaken on the invitation of Professor Miras who referred 28 cases to us. He cooperated in the study supplying the hashish used in the acute studies. We failed to confirm his preliminary observations, and I believe he is satisfied that the original reports were based on poor EEG recordings and clinical global assessments of organicity without controls.

The principal differences between users and controls are found in tolerance to hashish, some medical findings of a non-specific nature, and in social factors (After all, users persisted in criminal behavior - buying, selling, and smoking a prohibited substance - despite frequent jailing).

From my own point of view, the most important findings were the negative ones - no evidence of brain disease, aggressivity, or social withdrawal - and the positive evidence of tolerance. It turns out that cannabis substances obey the basic laws of pharmacology (we found no "reverse tolerance" for example); that it is a remarkably safe relaxant and euphoriant, and in contrast to alcohol, does not elicit aggressivity. Indeed if one had to select a CNS active drug to use, cannabis is remarkably safer than alcohol, opiates and probably equivalent (can one ever say it?) to tobacco.

The full study will be published this Fall by Raven Press as Long Term Hashish Use, edited by Stefanis, Dornbush and Fink. You may also wish to read the Jamaica study (Ganja in Jamaica, ed. by Rubin and Comitas) and the forthcoming report "Chronic Cannabis Use", N.Y. Academy of Sciences, edited by Dornbush.

Thank you for your thoughtful inquiry.

Sincerely yours,

Max Fink, M.D.  
Professor of Psychiatry