

December 6, 1977

Wm. Abruzzi, M.D.  
Fox Farm, Loon Lake Road  
Malone, New York

Dear Dr. Abruzzi,

Your c.v. exemplifies a rich experience. As to your questions, it is difficult to know how to answer the first. For decades, various authors have suggested that cannabis is associated with psychosis. Two theories have been stated-- that cannabis is a psychotogen, and that it 'liberates' psychotic tendencies that already exist. The issue is not whether cannabis is a psychotogen, for that issue is spurious. Since there is good evidence that cannabis inhalation alters brain function, it is clear that with such alteration there must be changes in behavior and there is no reason why such changes could not be manifest as psychotic symptoms. After all, the definition of psychosis is in the eye of the beholder, not in the symptoms themselves. If you have some additional data, then why not follow established custom and present the findings and the controls ?

At the New York Academy of Sciences meeting, it became clear that the observers in Greece, Jamaica and Costa Rica, under controlled conditions, could not confirm the development of psychosis in long-term users. But reporters from India (Chopra) and Egypt (Souief) did say that psychosis was common. There is a need for someone from the U.S., with the same support that the other foreign studies obtained, to go to India and Egypt and confirm their observations. Perhaps, you could undertake such a mission through your association at NYU. I have done my bit in such studies and would not do another.

Good luck in your summary of the recent studies.

Sincerely yours,

Max Fink, M.D.  
Professor of Psychiatry