



ASAM

The Voice of Addiction Medicine
American Society of Addiction Medicine

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American Society of Addiction Medicine Reacts to CNN's "WEED"

CHEVY CHASE, MD, AUGUST 12, 2013 – The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) expresses its concern that the CNN documentary "Weed", hosted by Dr. Sanjay Gupta, CNN Chief Medical Correspondent, may mislead Americans about the "medical" nature of smoked marijuana.

ASAM, the largest American medical professional society dedicated to the treatment and prevention of addiction, issued a white paper in 2011 that examined the therapeutic potential of cannabis and the role that Medicine, in particular, physicians, play in the delivery of "medical" marijuana. In short, there is some evidence that the cannabis in marijuana has certain palliative properties when it interacts with the body's endocannabinoid receptor system. However, cannabis used for medicinal purposes is neither standardized nor quality-controlled. Furthermore, it is typically smoked which is not a safe means of drug delivery.

"Dr. Gupta is a respected physician, recognized by many as a medical authority," offers Dr. Stuart Gitlow, MD, ASAM President. "We are concerned that his endorsement of marijuana as medicine may support the idea that smoked marijuana is safe and non-addictive." Neither notion is supported by research. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, marijuana is an intoxicating drug that impairs memory, motor function, and, when smoked, respiratory health. And, for nearly one in ten habitual users, marijuana is addictive.

"I see more and more patients who regularly use marijuana and many of them are young people", reflects Dr. Gitlow. "They think marijuana is harmless because it's 'medicine'." In fact, according to the 2011 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (SAMHSA, 2011), the decreasing perception among youths of risk of smoking marijuana from 2007 to 2011 is consistent with the increase in past month marijuana use among youths between 2007 and 2011 (7.9 percent reported using marijuana in the past month in 2011 versus 6.7 percent reporting use in 2007).

ASAM encourages an open and balanced dialogue about the possible benefits and risks of marijuana and is grateful to CNN and Dr. Gupta for advancing this discussion. "Marijuana may prove to have some clinical applications," says Dr. Gitlow. "But, until and when high quality scientific research supports that and the drug is subject to the same standards that are applicable to other prescription medications, marijuana cannot be called "medical."

The [American Society of Addiction Medicine](#) is a national medical specialty society of over 3,000 physicians. Its mission is to increase access to and improve the quality of addiction treatment, to educate physicians, and other health care providers and the public, to support research and prevention, to promote the appropriate role of the physician in the care of patients with addictive disorders, and to establish Addiction Medicine as a specialty recognized by professional organizations, governments, physicians, purchasers and consumers of health care services and the general public. ASAM was founded in 1954, and has had a seat in the American Medical Association House of Delegates since 1988.