

Dr. Gupta, What Are You Smoking?

Dr. Sanjay Gupta, CNN Chief Medical Correspondent, penned a column on Thursday headlined, “Why I changed my mind on weed.” In fact, he’s admitting he’s actually tried marijuana.

Talk about going full circle. Gupta once stood against a medical case for marijuana and even wrote a *Time magazine* article in 2009 called, “Why I would Vote No on Pot.”

Now, he’s making a very public apology for that stance.

“I apologize because I didn’t look hard enough, until now. I didn’t look far enough. I didn’t review papers from smaller labs in other countries doing some remarkable research, and I was too dismissive of the loud chorus of legitimate patients whose symptoms improved on cannabis,” Gupta wrote.

“Instead, I lumped them with the high-visibility malingerers, just looking to get high. I mistakenly believed the Drug Enforcement Agency listed marijuana as a schedule 1 substance because of sound scientific proof. Surely, they must have quality reasoning as to why marijuana is in the category of the most dangerous drugs that have ‘no accepted medicinal use and a high potential for abuse.’”

Gupta has concluded neither of those things are true—that marijuana doesn’t have a high potential for abuse and there are very legitimate medical applications.

I don’t disagree that there are legitimate medical uses for marijuana, but to believe it doesn’t have a high potential for abuse is a deception.

Marijuana is a gateway drug that leads to many other abuses, including alcohol, cocaine, crack, LSD, ecstasy and heroin. I

know because marijuana led me to all of those drugs—and more—and led many of my friends down the same path to addiction. (I wrote about this last year in an article called, “How God Delivered Me From the Demon of Pharmakeia.” Youth ministry movement leader Ron Luce also offers an excellent piece about how legalized pot is a buzz kill for teens.)

Gupta compares studies about adult dependency on marijuana to adult dependency on cocaine (10 percent compared to about 25 percent). Well, let me ask you: What drug did most of those cocaine users start off with? Marijuana. Gupta also compares the physical symptoms of marijuana addiction—such as insomnia, anxiety and nausea—to “life threatening” withdrawal from alcohol. Yet many teenagers smoke marijuana long before they drink a beer. Such comparisons, in any case, are beside the point. Marijuana has a high potential for abuse and comparing drug percentages of addicted adults doesn’t prove otherwise.

As a father, Gupta admits he wouldn’t want his children to smoke marijuana until they are adults: “If they are adamant about trying marijuana, I will urge them to wait until they’re in their mid-20s when their brains are fully developed.” Well, at least he admits that there are dangers for teens.

So I’m not completely against medical marijuana. But it’s a slippery slope when famed doctors like Gupta start penning articles headlined, “Why I changed my mind on weed.” There is plenty of research showing the dangers of marijuana—and Gupta didn’t give the full story on the stats in his article. Here’s the rest of the story:

The National Institute on Drug Abuse writes, “Long-term marijuana use can lead to addiction; that is, people have difficulty controlling their drug use and cannot stop even though it interferes with many aspects of their lives. It is estimated that 9 percent of people who use marijuana will become dependent on it.

“The number goes up to about 1 in 6 in those who start using young (in their teens) and to 25-50 percent among daily users. Moreover, a study of over 300 fraternal and identical twin pairs found that the twin who had used marijuana before the age of 17 had elevated rates of other drug use and drug problems later on, compared with their twin who did not use before age 17.

“According to the 2010 NSDUH, marijuana accounted for 4.5 million of the estimated 7.1 million Americans dependent on or abusing illicit drugs. In 2009, approximately 18 percent of people aged 12 and older entering drug abuse treatment programs reported marijuana as their primary drug of abuse; 61 percent of persons under 15 reported marijuana as their primary drug of abuse.”

So, Dr. Gupta, I hear what you are saying about medical marijuana. There is some truth to your argument, but you’ve now come dangerously close to endorsing marijuana use for all adults. Let me assure you, where there’s marijuana in adult homes, teenagers can easily access it and start smoking it. That’s what I did, and it almost ruined my life—and it did ruin the lives of some of my friends who are to this day addicted to heroin or dead.

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