

PSYCHIATRIC ASPECTS OF THE USE OF MARIHUANA

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SUMMARY:

In view of the fact that its recorded history goes back to at least 400 or 500 B.C., and it has most interesting psychopharmacological properties, it is surprising that there is, as is often claimed, such a paucity of good clinical studies of marihuana. Nonetheless, if one looks carefully and critically at the data which are available, one can delineate a number of clinically oriented statements, albeit qualified in varying degrees, about the drug. After completing a systematic review of several hundred of the most pertinent Cannabis papers, the author has addressed himself to the following psychiatrically relevant questions: (1) Is marihuana addicting? (2) Does it produce psychosis? (3) Is there a "marihuana psychosis"? (4) Does its long term use lead to character change? (5) Is it associated with anti-social aggressiveness? (6) Does it lead to sexual excess? (7) Does Cannabis have any clinical utility in psychiatry?

The major part of the paper will consist of critically reviewing the data which bear most directly on each of these questions, and in developing as conclusive a statement for each as the data will allow for at this time.

In addition to a relative poverty of good information about this drug, the author is impressed with the enormous amount of misinformation and myth which surrounds its use. In a short, more speculative section of the paper, an attempt will be made to understand the dynamics of this phenomenon.