

Scheduling amendments referred to expert advisory committee

Background

Cannabidiol (CBD) has the same chemical formula as Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) but is said not to have the same psychoactive properties. Nevertheless, CBD clearly has a potent effect on the human brain and nervous system, where its only clinically approved indication is in severe refractory forms of childhood epilepsy, that do not respond to existing anti-seizure medications. Its adverse effects include fatigue, drowsiness, increased appetite, sedation and aggravation of seizures.

Licensing and mass use of substances that affect the human brain

The mass use of substances that act upon the human brain and nervous system has enormous risk to cause harm. The opioid epidemic in Australia is one such example. Opioid-based medications exert an extremely potent effect on the nervous system – no one disputes their clinical efficacy in controlling pain. However, it is estimated that 1.4 million Australians are addicted to prescription opioids. Deloitte reported that prescription opioids resulted in 3,011 hospitalizations and 823 deaths in 2017-18 with an economic cost of \$4.7 billion.

Within 12 months of the licensing of CBD for general consumption, 14% of adults in the USA were using CBD principally for its effects on the brain (i.e. for anxiety, pain and insomnia), despite no medically accepted benefit from CBD. These substances inevitably cause significant physical and emotional harm and widespread economic detriment. Producers inevitably want to expand their markets and find ways to introduce new customers to their product(s). The temptation to exaggerate the benefits and minimize the harm is obvious. Conversely, there is no money in encouraging people to stop taking substances, which affect the brain. Ultimately tax-payers foot the bill for the consequences, which manifest themselves in our health outcomes and criminal justice system. Adding CBD to that list, with no scientific basis to support its purported use(s), would be reckless.

<https://news.gallup.com/poll/263147/americans-say-cbd-products.aspx>

<https://www.addictioncenter.com/addiction/addiction-in-australia/>

Submission

The government must refrain from licensing CBD. Substances should only be licensed if there is a medically proven indication.

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