



MUN BRIEFING PAPER

High hopes? The Legalisation of Medical Cannabis

Hello Delegates! My name's Archie Fergusson and I am a fifth year student at NBHS. I've attended MUN conferences since third year and this will be my 2nd time chairing. As well as chairing the health committee alongside Eilidh Smith, I am also Joint Secretary General for our conference. I'm sure I can speak for all the chairs in saying that we are all looking forward to some very enjoyable debates and hope that you will all endeavour to do your best to contribute and keep them as lively as possible.

We urge you to create a short position paper, about 50 words long, on your country's stance on the chosen topics and send them to both myself and Eilidh (nb14ferga@edubuzz.org or nb13smite@edubuzz.org). It is vital that you send us your position paper if you want to be in with a chance of winning a prize. In addition to your position paper we recommend that you create a resolution on each of the topics. You should bring these resolutions to the final debate with both access to an electronic copy and a paper copy. Writing a resolution paper will help you with understanding your country's stance and make the debate a thoroughly more enjoyable experience for you and everyone else. **If you have queries don't hesitate to contact us!**

The question I have for you today is, should cannabis be legalised for medicinal use worldwide? Humans themselves have been using cannabis for thousands of years both medicinally and recreationally. Why is it only in the last few centuries that we have imposed restrictions? Causing people to suffer from lifelong illnesses which affect their day-to-day lives when carefully prescribed doses could curtail these illnesses if not prevent them completely.

Cannabis in itself is not a very addictive drug with only 10% of users becoming 'hooked', but the effects of using stronger strains recreationally are highly sought out by drug users.

This is because cannabis contains hundreds of chemicals called cannabinoids each one producing a different effect on the body. Most of these cannabinoids are not hugely influential though there are two that can produce effects that are medicinally helpful but also very dangerous when not regulated.

THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) is the psychoactive present in cannabis and is responsible for the "high" experienced. THC is also known to alleviate pain and stress though can increase anxiety levels among other side effects. The second cannabinoid is CBD (cannabidiol). CBD is thought to have the main medicinal effects



MUN BRIEFING PAPER

produced by cannabis. It is also thought to be the counter drug for THC. It can cause fatigue, diarrhoea and malaise as well as possible anti-anxiety and ordered-thinking. The problems with using cannabis as a medicine is that we do not know enough about its effects. Although it can help with certain rare forms of epilepsy and inflammatory bowel diseases such as Crohn's disease. It can cause seizures for more common forms of epilepsy, depression and schizophrenia (if taken at a young age), along with bloodshot eyes, cotton mouth, dizziness and hallucinations. Some countries instead of legalising straight cannabis or cannabis oil have produced more specific drugs derived from the cannabinoids found in cannabis. Sativex is a spray containing mild amounts of THC and CBD extracted from the cannabis plant and used as mouth spray for MS among other things. Dronabinol is another of these drugs containing a synthetic THC based on that found in cannabis and can treat neuropathic pain, stimulate appetites and stop vomiting and nausea.

Successful use of medicinal Cannabis - Inflammatory bowel diseases

In clinical trials conducted on patients with Crohn's disease the use of medicinal cannabis has had extremely beneficial results. 50% of the Crohn's patients achieved complete remission and over 90% achieving substantial improvement. The evidence for the use of cannabis in Crohn's and other forms of IBD (Inflammatory bowel diseases) is conclusive.

A study of 319 patients suffering from IBD's in Canada found 83.9% reported improved abdominal pain, 76.8% indicated improved abdominal cramping, 48.2% had improved joint pain, and 28.6% reported improved diarrhea.¹² Patients also believed that cannabis improved their general well-being, stress level, and sense of control over IBD. Surprisingly, 35.7% of patients believed that cannabis worked better than corticosteroids, and nearly 43% reported fewer side effects with cannabis use compared with corticosteroids (corticosteroids is a specific anti-inflammatory medication).

34 countries around the world already allow the medicinal use of pure cannabis under prescription with a number more on top of that legalising pharmaceuticals based or derived from cannabis to extracts. But still in so many other countries patients are being denied care which could improve their quality of life .



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Points to consider:

- Should it be legalised worldwide for medical use?
- What is your countries stance?
- Should clinical trials continue?
- How would it be implemented?
- How much say should countries get on what conditions it's prescribed for?
- Who should have control over the cannabis supply and distribution?

*(Disclaimer: resolutions and position papers should be purely on the medicinal use of cannabis. Any resolutions or position papers that even suggest the recreational use will be vetoed and the delegate(s) **will not** be considered for a prize)*

Useful links

http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/facts/cannabis/en/

https://www.medicinenet.com/medical_marijuana_medical_cannabis/article.htm#medical_marijuana_facts

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5193087/#!po=26.3889>

https://www.bmj.com/sites/default/files/response_attachments/2015/03/Medicinal%20Cannabis%20The%20Evidence%20V1.pdf

https://www.jstor.org/stable/3528708?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

<https://medicalmarijuana.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=000883>