

Colorado's 'Pot Pregnancies' Birthing New Generation of Crack Babies

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What a long, strange trip it's been for pot legalization in Colorado.

First, the law came under fire last year for not protecting youth as scores of children were taken to emergency rooms after ingesting their parents' pot edibles.

Just a few days ago, nine former heads of the Drug Enforcement Administration — both Republican and Democrat — signed onto an amicus brief urging the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn Colorado's legalization of marijuana citing numerous public safety concerns.

Now, Colorado health professionals are coming forward to report an emerging trend: expectant mothers who are addicted to pot.

The emerging health crisis is creating what is undoubtedly our generation's version of 1980s "crack babies."

Health practitioners specializing in the field of Obstetrics & Gynecology spoke to me on condition of anonymity to report an alarming rise in pregnant patients showing up in emergency rooms and doctors' offices and presenting mysterious complications including abdominal pains, cold sweats, shakiness, insomnia, weight loss and a host of psychological problems.

According to the physicians, as routine pot smokers cease consumption of marijuana upon learning they are pregnant, it can lead to violent or painful withdrawal from tetrahydrocannabinol — also known as THC — the addictive substance found in marijuana.

Physicians say the exact cause and treatment of symptoms are initially difficult to pinpoint as patients either don't admit to prior pot use, or aren't aware that weeks-old or even months-old marijuana consumption can remain in the body and cause such withdrawals, thus affecting children in the womb.

While the physicians in Colorado commend pot users for refraining from the use of marijuana during pregnancy, they regret to inform the patient that it is the first step in a potentially long battle.

According to the Cleveland Clinic, the presence of THC in fetuses can lead to impairment of fetus growth and low birth weight.

The March of Dimes reports that the presence of marijuana can lead to premature birth. It can also create problems with brain development which may later affect a child's "behavior, memory, problem-solving skills and ability to pay attention." It can also create neonatal abstinence syndrome, in which a baby gets addicted to a drug before birth "then goes through withdrawal after birth."

In order to treat symptoms as well as help alleviate the pain of the withdrawal process, the physicians in Colorado report they have had to reintroduce doses of THC to expectant mothers, which of course leaves their babies susceptible to addiction and the complications above which often must be treated in neonatal units.

The emerging situation is not unlike babies who are addicted to crack.

Cases of THC addictions during pregnancy are so much on the rise that Colorado's health professionals have begun to bone up on the subject matter of THC and other complications from pot.

At a recent three-day nursing conference, Colorado OB-GYN nurses spent the entire final day of the conference covering THC-related topics.

All of this presents new challenges for Colorado which is already struggling to keep up with demands placed upon the state by Obamacare.

And now that another state has legalized pot, these cases could become an epidemic.

These gestations, which I call "pot pregnancies," are yet another chapter in a legalization experiment that has gone horribly awry at an expense to public health and to children — both born and unborn — who have no say in the matter.

While the Colorado legislature rushes to fix many side effects of legalization one has to ask, "Does the benefit of legalizing this substance outweigh the risk to public health?"

Those who suggest it does are simply blowing smoke.