

Short Report – Lessons After Two Years of Legalization

Smart Approaches to Marijuana (SAM), the non-partisan marijuana policy group comprised of leading scientists from around the country, released [Lessons After Two Years of Marijuana Legalization – Short Report](#) today. [The report](#) outlines both what data we know – and what we need to know – to accurately evaluate the consequences and costs of marijuana legalization in Washington and Colorado. SAM is advised by a respected group of scientists and its Honorary Board includes former Congressman Patrick J. Kennedy and former speechwriter David Frum. [See the report here.](#)

“Two years after legalization was voted on, we are still waiting for robust tracking mechanisms from the states of Colorado and Washington, and the federal government,” remarked Sabet. “We have 100 kinds of marijuana gummy bears out there, but no way to find out what the costs of such a policy are. It defies any definition of ‘experiment,’ which presumes a proper scientific evaluation.”

Though it is too early to firm up final conclusions, there are concerns in 2015 we cannot ignore after two full years of legalized possession and one year of legalized retail sales. [The report](#) outlines these concerns, such as:

- Past-year and past-month marijuana use by all ages exceeds the national average in both Washington State and Colorado. Marijuana use in both these states has risen significantly between 2011-2012 and 2012-2013.
- The number of burn victims in Colorado from hash oil explosions has significantly increased since legalization.
- Between 2008 and 2011, an average of 4 children (between the ages of 3 and 7) were sent to the ER for unintentional marijuana ingestion. In 2013, 8 children went to the Colorado Children’s hospital. As of the first half of 2014, at least 14 children have already been sent to the ER.
- The number of marijuana citations given for public or underage use has skyrocketed in Denver and Aurora versus last year.
- According to the Washington Poison Center, “the selling of cannabis for recreational purposes became legalized in the state of Washington on July 7th, 2014. As a direct result, the Washington Poison Center (WAPC) has encountered an increase in the number of human exposures related to accidental or excessive consumption/inhalation of marijuana and marijuana edibles, particularly among pediatrics.”
- Contaminant testing in Washington finds that 13% of pot and THC-infused products contain mold, salmonella, and E. coli. Colorado has not begun such testing yet.

- A marijuana-focused private equity firm, Privateer Holdings in partnership with the descendants of Bob Marley, have created a multinational cannabis brand called Marley Natural. Investors have already raised \$50 million to launch Marley Natural.

The report also outlines what we do not know, and asks states to track both the consequences of legalization and the economic costs of legalization. The report was compiled by SAM and its scientific advisory board, which includes Hoover Adger, MD, Professor of Pediatrics and Director of Adolescent Medicine, Johns Hopkins University; Eden Evins, MD, MPH, Associate Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School; Stuart Gitlow, MD, MPH, MBA, President, American Society of Addiction Medicine; Sion Harris, PhD, Center for Adolescent Substance Abuse Research, Children's Hospital Boston; Sharon Levy, MD, MPH, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, Harvard Medical School; Kimber Richter, MD, PhD, Professor of Preventive Medicine and Public Health, University of Kansas; Paula Riggs, MD, Associate Professor of Psychiatry, University of Colorado at Denver; Christian Thurstone, MD, Associate Professor of Psychiatry, University of Colorado; Kathryn Wells, MD, Associate Professor of Pediatrics, University of Colorado at Denver.