

# Bradenton Herald

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Opinion/Letters to the Editor

## **Pot's impact on youth far too destructive**

Why I care about weed:

The U.S. National Academy of Sciences found that regular marijuana use begun in adolescence can have long lasting effects on the brain that may not be reversible. Marijuana use lowers I.Q., which is a measure of how much someone can know.

The more one uses marijuana, the greater the I.Q. decline -- about six to eight points overall. Such a drop from an average I.Q. would mean that 70 percent of the population would have a greater intellectual potential than you -- a significant drop!

Furthermore, about 6,000 companies nationwide require pre-employment drug testing. But 6.6 percent of high school seniors smoke marijuana daily, rendering them unemployable. Also, that eight-point I.Q. drop lowers your lifetime earned wages by around \$250,000!

The Journal of the American Medical Association found that marijuana-using teens are up to five times more likely than others to have further drug use and serious addiction problems.

Poor school performance, increased dropout potential, increased risky behaviors and serious mental health problems are also more likely for marijuana-using teens.

In states that have allowed smoked medical marijuana, new issues have had to be addressed. For example, 74 percent of adolescents in substance abuse treatment in Colorado reported getting their marijuana from someone who could legally purchase it.

Nationally, 68 percent of adolescents get their alcohol from someone who can legally purchase it and 63 percent get tobacco the same way.

Clearly, parents, professionals and educators will need to be vigilant in talking with teens about the dangers of marijuana in the same way we now talk about alcohol and cigarettes.

So. I care about marijuana because it has little place in the adolescent brain and can cause serious lifelong problems with less intellectual potential, lower wages, increased psychosis, poorer school performance, increased STD/HIV risk, and serious changes to the brain.

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