

MEDICAL MARIJUANA DISPENSARIES

WOULD THEY BE GOOD OR BAD FOR KALAMAZOO?

I will briefly present information from **academic research, government officials and patients.**

Some citizens fear that dispensaries could bring an increase in crime.

Two studies address this:

- 1) In their report entitled "Regulating Medical Marijuana Dispensaries: An Overview With Preliminary Evidence of Their Impact on Crime", the prestigious RAND corporation found that crime rates actually increase in areas where medical marijuana dispensaries *have been shut down*. (The market for marijuana returns to the street, which is unregulated.) The government forced the RAND Corporation to withdraw this study because of problems with the research design, but RAND corporation research is usually the "gold standard" for high quality.
- 2) In July of 2012 Kepple and Freisthler released a major statistical analysis entitled "Exploring the Ecological Associations Between Crime and Medical Marijuana Dispensaries". They found that crime is associated with factors such as the percentage of commercially zoned areas, the unemployment rate, the percentage of one person households, poverty, and the percentage of the population that is between 15 and 24 years old. No positive associations whatsoever were found between crime and medical cannabis dispensaries, even if dispensaries were concentrated within certain neighborhoods.

City officials continually comment that good regulations result in good dispensaries, (and Ann Arbor already has developed good zoning and licensing ordinances that could be used by Kalamazoo).

- 1) Mike Rotkin, four term mayor of the city of Santa Cruz California, said, "Because [dispensaries] are well run and regulated and located in an area acceptable to the City they get cooperation from local police....It is no longer a controversial issue in our city."
- 2) Oakland California city administrator Barbara Killey notes that "The areas around the dispensaries may be some of the safest areas of Oakland now because of the security, surveillance etc...since the ordinance passed".
- 3) Santa Rosa California Mayor Jane Bender notes that, since their regulatory ordinance was passed, "The city attorney says there have been no complaints either from citizens or from neighboring businesses" **GOOD REGULATION IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS!**

It is important to realize that medical cannabis dispensaries have now operated in Ann Arbor and other Michigan cities for over two years with no particular problems.

It is also important to recognize how safe cannabis is...safer than water. There is no known lethal dose of cannabis – if you drink too much water you can die.

What about the patients? Do we care about them?

Alameda county supervisor Nathan Miley said “When designing regulations it is crucial to remember that **at its core this is a healthcare issue**”.

Without a dispensary, the most serious patients (people who can't start a garden and wait 4 months for a harvest) will not get their medicine and will suffer for no reason. A 2006 study by Amanda Reiman, Ph.D at the University of California at Berkeley, found that patients gave an 80% satisfaction rating to dispensaries they patronized (which is significantly higher than ratings given to health care clinics in general). Patients who might have otherwise been isolated by their illness frequently cited their relationships with dispensary staff as a positive factor. Patients were pleased to be able to get exactly the type of cannabis medication they needed, and to be able to take advantage of auxiliary services such as counseling, therapeutic massage, social gatherings, entertainment, and support groups.

Dispensaries have very strict rules and membership

agreements which must be signed and adhered to by all members. Any member who resold medicine (or even hung out in the parking lot) would be immediately terminated as a member. No dispensary operator would risk losing their license to operate by allowing any bad behavior anywhere near their building.

The truth is clear. Medical Marijuana dispensaries do no harm, and are of great benefit to both patients and to local economic activity.

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