HUMAN SERVICES

ADDICTIONS

GLOBAL ASSIGNMENT

Read the article below and then answer the questions on the next page:

MARRIOTT
UNDCP Bulletin on Narcotics, 1972, Issue 1, Page 2

**"The Cannabis Habit"**
[UNDCP Bulletin on Narcotics, Issue 1:](http://www.undcp.org/bulletin/bulletin_1963-01-01_1_page004.html)

"**In this light it is clear that the free availability of cannabis can be harmful, but it is not so clear that this is more harmful than the free availability of alcohol. The question arises, therefore, why cannabis is so regularly banned in countries where alcohol is permitted.** One reason may be that, having little direct experience with the drug and hearing the alarming picture reported from countries such as Egypt, these other countries have decided simply to be on the safe side. Another reason may be that the causes of cannabis habituation are confused with its effects. A third reason may be that, because few other pleasures are available to a mass of the people in certain countries, recourse to cannabis there follows the disastrous pattern of the recourse to alcohol in eighteenth-century Britain. One cannot read Benabud's sympathetic description of the Moroccan urban proletariat without realizing that life offers such people very few inducements not to drown themselves in a cannabis illusion. However, there is yet another reason why, I think, alcohol is tolerated in Anglo-Saxon countries while cannabis is feared. It derives from the work ethic of Protestantism and its hostility towards inaction. In India, cannabis can be tolerated and even used by the Brahmin priesthood because social inaction can have a positive connotation, whereas alcohol, with its potential release of repressed impulses, is disapproved of as a disturber and distracter. In Anglo-Saxon cultures inaction is looked down on and often feared, whereas over-activity, aided by alcohol or independently of alcohol, is considerably tolerated despite the social disturbance produced. **It may be that we can ban cannabis simply because the people who use it, or would do so, carry little weight in social matters and are relatively easy to control, whereas the alcohol user often carries plenty of weight in social matters and is difficult to control, as the U.S. prohibition era showed. It has yet to be shown, however, that the one is more socially or personally disruptive than the other.**"

"The Cannabis Habit",
Ph. D. H.B.M MURPHY, M.D.
Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry, McGill University

1. What is your opinion of the reasons stated for tolerance of cannabis in certain countries?
2. What are the consequences (pro or con) for the legalization of cannabis in places like some regions of India or Europe?
3. Are you for or against the legalization of cannabis in the USA? Why?
4. According to this article why did prohibition fail in the USA?
5. Cigarettes cause more illness and death than any other legal or illegal substance and are not illegal in any country. Why do you think this is true?

Note to faculty: This critical thinking exercise will allow students to look outside US views of “substance abuse” and broaden their perspective on the diagnosis and treatment of people who use these substances.