Reefer Rap

Tips for medical marijuana mavens

April 1, 1999 By Becky Minnich

Out of treatment options for appetite loss, nausea or pain? Is old Mary Jane just what the doctor would order, but for a not-so-minor legal glitch? Ballot initiatives authorizing medical marijuana have passed in Alaska, Arizona, California, Oregon and Washington state (exit polls showed that DC voted yes, but results were pre-empted by a congressional ban), meaning that patients can't be arrested by state or local cops for having or growing doc-approved pot. While it remains a federal crime to distribute or possess any part of the cannabis plant, these five states allow court-recognized "care-givers" (the definition varies) to provide both weed and seed to medically qualified patients. But battles still rage over what the state laws mean for large-scale distribution, and raids of buyers clubs continue.

The few remaining clubs offer a safe way to acquire pot by prescription, and they usually provide a better-quality supply. Growing your own, of course, is much cheaper. Here are a few tips as you embark on your magical medical tour in search of the forbidden herb.

1. Know the law. Find out the legal status of medical marijuana in your state and locality (contact the Marijuana Policy Project, P.O. Box 77492, Capitol Hill, Washington, DC 20013; 202.462.5747; website: www.mpp.org). (In California, you must be a legal resident to possess or cultivate medical marijuana legally—and even those people are occasionally arrested.) Depending on the law in your area, you could endanger yourself or others just by asking questions.

2. Talk to your doctor. If your state makes a legal exemption for marijuana possession for people with a medical need, you must carry documentation of this need (still, this is not an iron-clad protection against arrest). This means a signed letter from your doctor stating that he or she has determined that your health would benefit from the use of marijuana as a treatment for a specific illness. You must carry this with you at all times. In some cases you may need further documentation.

3. Grow your own. Most buyers clubs encourage you to do this, but again, check the legal situation in your state. With proper lighting, marijuana can be grown in a closet. To help protect yourself legally, don't grow more than is necessary for your own medical needs.

4. Select your seeds. Research your choice of seeds carefully to ensure maximum quality. Try to

find hybrid and cloned varieties. If you need advice, consult an experienced friend, study the many growers' guidebooks available, or check with a buyers club.

5. Get smart. Self-education about pot as a treatment includes learning about recommended dosages and ways to safely minimize possible side effects (such as fatigue and poor concentration). If you search the Web using the keywords *medical marijuana*, you'll find dozens of sites offering the latest on buyers clubs, legal battles, grassroots campaigns, cultivation tips and medical data. A good starting point is the site of the San Francisco Buyers Club (see "How to Score" at right). Or consult the books listed on the next page.

HOW TO SCORE
All info is local

Due to ever-shifting law enforcement—one week, a raid shuts down a buyers club, and the next week, a new one springs up—published lists of places to obtain medical marijuana are notoriously unereliable. The best we can do is to offer local sources of information on—not access to—medical marijuana. Since many of these groups and individuals are under legal pressure, exercise discretion in your contacts, and always state your medical needs upfront.

CALIFORNIA

Californians for Compassionate Use
e-mail: cbc@marijuana.org
website: www.marijuana.org

Ryan Landers (Sacramento)
916.448.6442
e-mail: DoctorPot@aol.com

Scott Imler (Los Angeles)
323.874.0811
e-mail:simler97@ix.netcom.com
website: www.lacbc.org

Marin Alliance for Medical Marijuana
415.256.9328

San Francisco Buyers Club
Oakland Cannabis Buyers Co-Op
Both recently shut down by court order, but OCBC's website lists members-only horticulture classes" (membership criteria included).
web: www.rxcbc.org/medical.html

Ukiah Cannabis Clib and Marijuana Information Center
40A Pallini Lane
Ukiah, CA 95482
707.462.0691
e-mail: ucbc@saber.net

NEW YORK

New York Cannabis Care
Johann Moore, 212.262.7572

PENNSYLVANIA

Transcendental Medication (Philadelphia)
Kiyoshi Kuromiya, 215.545.2212
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