Medical Marijuana Research in the U.S. Just Got Easier

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The White House recently took a big step forward in supporting marijuana (a.k.a. cannabis) research by lifting a long-contested review requirement that advocates say has stifled and delayed studies on the drug's therapeutic benefits for years, the Washington Post reports.

The move eliminated review of privately funded marijuana research proposals by the Public Health Service (PHS).

Until now, if scientists wanted to conduct marijuana research in the United States they had to submit their study proposals to both the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the PHS, which are nearly identical review processes.

That PHS review step is not required for research into any other drug, including heroin and cocaine. For years, marijuana research advocates argued that this step was a unnecessary, complicated process that could take months to complete. During the past few years, researchers, members of Congress and even opponents of legalizing marijuana clamored for elimination of the PHS review in order to streamline research efforts.

Despite the recent victory, medical marijuana supporters said there are still more bureaucratic hurdles to unchallenged research on cannabis. For one thing, the National Institute on Drug Abuse holds a monopoly on legal marijuana production that doesn't exist for any other drug. In addition, advocates want marijuana taken off the list of Schedule I drugs, which categorizes it as a substance with no therapeutic value.

For more information about medical marijuana research, click here.

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