



**S**ometimes, a good-faith effort that results in failure can still have positive consequences. Such was the case regarding the unsuccessful four-year struggle of MAPS and Dr. Donald Abrams, UC San Francisco, to obtain permission to conduct FDA-approved research into the use of smoked marijuana in the treatment of patients suffering from the AIDS wasting syndrome.

On November 5, 1996, over 4.8 million people in California, 56% of the electorate, voted to pass Proposition 215, an initiative which legalized the use of marijuana by patients whose physicians recommend marijuana for their medical conditions. In the final weeks of the campaign, several reporters contacted MAPS requesting a response to one of the main arguments against Proposition 215—that there is insufficient scientific evidence to justify the medical use of marijuana. These inquiries gave me the opportunity to summarize the evidence that did exist and relate in detail the saga of our ill-fated attempt to gather additional evidence. News stories on the political suppression of medical marijuana research appeared on Page 1 of the *LA Times*, in prominent places in several San Francisco papers, and on radio talk shows.

### **Letter from Rick Doblin, MAPS President**

MAPS members can take some satisfaction in knowing that our work on behalf of medical marijuana research, though thwarted, may have helped convince some undecided voters to support Proposition 215. Our efforts demonstrated that the government's duplicitous rhetoric about the lack of research was linked to a policy designed to prevent research. Perhaps the Clinton Administration will have learned from voters in California and also in Arizona, where Proposition 200 legalized the medical use of marijuana, that it is the suppression of research that "*sends the wrong message*" and destroys the credibility of government officials.

MAPS and Dr. Abrams will continue to try to obtain permission for medical marijuana research. MAPS has committed to making another \$5,000 contribution to the San Francisco Community Consortium to cover staff time and expenses involved in redesigning the protocol for the third time. The revised protocol will be submitted for review in the National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant cycle that begins May 1, 1997. This will leave sufficient time to have the protocol redesigned, evaluated and approved by the FDA prior to resubmitting it to NIH.

MAPS will also seek clarification from the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) concerning the criteria which it will use to evaluate an application for a DEA license to establish a non-profit marijuana production facility to provide marijuana to FDA-approved research projects. MAPS has received a \$5,000 grant from the Drug Policy Foundation to aid in this effort.

Progress is also being made on the long-awaited MDMA study by Dr. Charles Grob and Russell Poland, Ph.D., Harbor-UCLA Medical Center. This study will investigate the use of MDMA in the treatment of pain and distress in end-stage cancer patients. Dr. Poland has received a \$12,500 grant from MAPS to supervise and complete the protocol design and approval process before Summer 1997.

Now that I live within a household filled with the laughter and tears of two small children, I've come to appreciate the difficulties involved in the process of responsible education. This issue's drug education articles are offered as a contribution to the struggles faced by many parents who are uncomfortable with the drug education provided in schools, don't want to leave it to their children's peers and are uncertain how to approach the issue themselves.

I hope that this holiday season finds you happy, healthy and with enough time to read the articles of interest at your leisure. •

Rick Doblin, MAPS President,  
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