

## MAPS Medical Marijuana Research Projects

continued federal obstruction of vaporizer research and UMass Amherst production facility

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Both the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) are pursuing the classic bureaucratic strategy of unreasonable delay and inaction in response to MAPS' efforts to mount a serious research program aimed at developing marijuana into an FDA-approved prescription medicine. The Bush Administration's rhetoric that the issue of the medical use of marijuana should be decided by scientific research rather than state initiatives, legislative actions, or lawsuits, rings increasingly hollow in the face of prolonged obstruction of research.

### VAPORIZER RESEARCH

Chemic Labs has conducted over \$75,000 of MAPS and California NORML-funded research into the chemical constituents of the vapors produced by marijuana vaporizers (for more details, see [www.maps.org/mmj/vaporizer.html](http://www.maps.org/mmj/vaporizer.html)). On June 24, 2003, Chemic formally applied to NIDA to purchase ten grams of marijuana at cost to continue its research, and applied to DEA to import ten grams from the Dutch Office of Medicinal Cannabis of higher potency marijuana not available from NIDA. NIDA claimed it needed to determine if the submitted protocol was "scientifically meritorious" before determining if Chemic would be permitted to purchase ten grams of its material. DEA stated it wouldn't even bother to review the import permit application until after NIDA had determined the protocol was "scientifically meritorious."

Almost a year later, the protocol has not yet been reviewed. Furthermore, the person Chemic was most recently told was in charge of the review, Rear Admiral Dr. Arthur J. Lawrence, Assistant Surgeon General, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health (Operations), informed Chemic on March 17, 2004, that "the responsibility for conducting the reviews is in the process of being transferred to a different unit of the Department. At the moment, I don't have the ability to specify where this particular protocol is in the process." As of May 12, 2004, repeated efforts to determine where the protocol is in the review process have met with no reply.

Meanwhile, Dr. Donald Abrams' FDA-approved clinical study comparing cannabinoid blood levels, carbon monoxide levels, and subjective effects in subjects (who at different times smoke marijuana or inhale the vapors from a vaporizer), currently awaits NIDA marijuana.

### UMASS AMHERST MARIJUANA PRODUCTION FACILITY

In June 2001 Prof. Lyle Craker, Director of the Medicinal Plant Program at the UMass Amherst Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, submitted an application to DEA for a license to establish a facility to produce high-potency marijuana for use exclusively in federally-approved protocols (for more information, see [www.maps.org/mmj/mmjfacility.html](http://www.maps.org/mmj/mmjfacility.html)). After years of ignoring the application, DEA finally followed federal regulations and posted a notice of the application in the *Federal Register*, with a public comment period that ended September 23, 2003. DEA has yet to issue a ruling, despite receiving an October 23, 2003 letter from Massachusetts Senators Kennedy and Kerry supporting the licensing of the UMass Amherst facility.

### CONCLUSION

The Bush Administration is clearly frightened of objective scientific research into the risks and benefits of the medical uses of marijuana. MAPS' challenge is to raise the costs of federal obstruction of research, so that researchers are no longer locked out of their labs and patients are no longer locked into prison. •

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