

## Op Ed Article - Pot is not a Prescription

*Attributable to UMA President Paul N. Clayton, MD*

The financial forces determined to expand the legal marijuana-growing industry to every state are blowing smoke at the media in Utah. Several news outlets are breathing in the fumes and producing stories about a great unmet (and so far unproven) need for "medical" marijuana. But as any responsible physician will tell you, marijuana is not medicine, cannabis is no cure, and pot is not a prescription.

True, there is some valid evidence for the use of cannabidiol oil (with most of the THC removed) in the treatment of frequent epileptic seizures and for the use of a few other legitimate medicines derived from marijuana. But the evidence on the uses for "whole plant" cannabis is mostly anecdotal, with valid, empirical studies scarce at best, and spurious at worst.

Recent polls show that many Utah residents approve the concept of allowing doctors to prescribe pot if they think it will help their patients. But news stories and even the polls are misleading Utahns by calling it "medical" marijuana, thus giving the public the impression that it is a drug that has been vetted and approved by the medical community and has gone through the normal drug process for approval – and that physicians would know what to prescribe, who to prescribe it to, what illnesses to prescribe it for, what contraindications and interactions it would have with other drugs and all the other information they need to prescribe.

Until solid, valid evidence proves otherwise, responsible physicians declare: ***marijuana is not medicine***. There are no standards for production, no consistency in strength or dosage, no proof of safety or efficacy and no diagnosis for which better alternatives do not exist. Until the research is conducted and the information is gathered and disseminated to the medical community, it is not "medical" marijuana. Research should be supported. Medicine cannot be legislated into being, although legislation can help speed the process of research. There is a correct process that must be followed and should not be circumvented for determining what is medicine.

The Utah Medical Association encourages all physicians to let Utahns know that they will not be prescribing pot, even if it is allowed through legislation; because it just isn't good medicine. If research shows there is efficacy for cannabis-based medicines, and they are given the information they need to prescribe those medicines, only then will responsible doctors prescribe.