

Is Marijuana Use Safe?

Modeled example for the final paper assignment

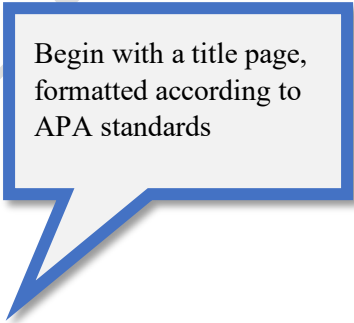
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PHI103 Informal Logic

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Due: Day 7 of Week 5



Begin with a title page,
formatted according to
APA standards

In recent years, most states have voted to legalize marijuana either for medical and recreational use (DISA Global Solutions, 2020). However, federal law still prohibits the sale of marijuana in the United States, and many groups consider marijuana use to be harmful (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2019). As more states consider differing degrees of marijuana legalization (Sanders, 2018), it is important to consider whether marijuana use is safe. This paper will explore the question of whether current medical research supports the idea that marijuana use is harmful to human health. It will present a strong argument that marijuana is relatively safe and a strong argument that it is unacceptably dangerous. This will be followed by a presentation of my own argument for the conclusion that marijuana use by adults is acceptably safe. After answering an objection to my argument, the paper will present an analysis of the merits of reasoning and support provided by each argument.

A good intro paragraph should close with a preview of what the paper will accomplish.

Argument that Marijuana Use is Safe

There have been many studies that support the conclusion that marijuana use is safe. Some of their results are summarized in this argument:

It is good to have clear section headings, showing your instructor exactly where you accomplish each of the main elements of the assignment instructions.

The clearest way to express an argument is by putting it into standard form, with each premise clearly labeled and listed above the conclusion.

Premise 1: A giant meta-study pooled data from many research studies and determined that marijuana use did not result in significant cognitive impairment in reaction time, attention, language, executive function, perceptual function, or motor function in healthy users (Grant et al., 2003).

This argument is an enhancement of the scholarly argument presented in the Week 3 paper.

Premise 2: Meta-data showed minor cognitive impairment from long term marijuana only in the areas of learning and memory, but these were minor and can be minimized (e.g., in a medical context) (2003).

Premise 3: Marijuana has beneficial uses that outweigh its minor harms (Wetterau, 2015).

All premises and conclusions should be one sentence each.

Though the premises and conclusion of your argument are in your own words, specific sources of information need to be cited.

Premise 4: The above dangers do not constitute being substantially me

Conclusion: Marijuana use is not substantially medically dangerous.

Argument that Marijuana Use is Unsafe

On the other hand, many studies have indicated that there are, in fact, many risks associated with marijuana use. Some of their chief findings are expressed in the following argument:

Premise 1: Marijuana is an addictive substance (Volkow et al., 2014).

Premise 2: Marijuana use causes long term negative effects on physical and mental health (Feeney & Kampman, 2016).

Premise 3: Marijuana use causes elevated driving risks (Neavyn et al., 2014).

Premise 4: Marijuana use among adolescents is correlated with lower academic achievement, job performance, and social functioning (Palamar et al., 2014).

Premise 5: It is unsafe to use substances that are addictive and that have many negative effects.

Conclusion: It is unsafe to use Marijuana.

Analysis of the Arguments

As noted, both arguments have premises that are supported by substantial scholarly research. Both arguments additionally provide strong support for the truth of their conclusions. Each includes a final premise that links the factual claims made in the previous premises to the specific language made in the conclusion, resulting in powerful support for each conclusion.

One of the goals of a critical thinker is to make sure to understand the reasoning on all sides of a question as well as possible. Therefore, it is essential to present the strongest reasoning that we can find/think of in support of both sides of our question.

These premises summarize much of your research in your own words.

This premise provides a link from the points made in the first premises to the language of the conclusion.

Neither is deductively valid, but each is inductively strong and appears to have well-supported premises. However, their conclusions make opposite points, resulting in an apparent contradiction. There is a good question, therefore, of how to determine which of these conclusions is most likely to be true.

One way to explain strong evidence for opposite conclusions is with the possibility of researcher bias. Authors, even of scholarly studies, frequently put more focus on studies whose results tend to support the conclusions that they personally support. Furthermore, each study tends to focus on factors that strengthen the case for its preferred side. For example, a scholar whose research supports the use of marijuana might focus on mitigating factors such as the fact that dosages can be carefully controlled in a medical setting. Researchers on the side of the opposition, on the other hand, may emphasize that addicted users are likely to use the substance in doses well beyond those recommended by physicians. Therefore, there are biases, including confirmation bias, even in scholarly sources.

Specific examples can help to clarify and strengthen key points.

Both arguments provide well-supported premises and very strong reasoning. Evaluating which is stronger can be a difficult question. It depends upon the specific application we are considering. If a teenager is considering recreational marijuana use, the second argument provides substantial evidence that the demonstrated harms make the choice unacceptably dangerous. However, if a legislator is contemplating voting for a law to legalize medical marijuana within a state, the evidence from the first argument is adequate, in my view, to conclude that use by adults in a medical context is acceptably safe. So relative to the question of adult use, I determine that the first argument is stronger.

Presentation of My Own Argument

Based on my research and my evaluation of the reasoning that I have found therein, I now present my own reasoning regarding the safety of marijuana use:

Premise 1: A scholarly study found that use of marijuana by adolescents results in long-term cognitive impairment (Meier et al., 2012).

Premise 2: A substance whose use results in long-term cognitive impairment when used by adolescents is not acceptably safe for recreational use by adolescents.

Premise 3: These impairments were not found in those who started smoking adults (Meier et. al, 2012).

Premise 4: Marijuana has only minor harms when used by adults (Grant et al., 2003).

Premise 5: Marijuana has many beneficial medical uses (Ault, 1999).

Premise 6: A substance that has many beneficial medical uses and only minor harms is acceptably safe for medical use.

Conclusion: Marijuana is not acceptably safe for recreational use by adolescents but is acceptably safe for medical use by adults.

Though the premises and conclusion of your argument are in your own words, specific sources of information need to be cited.

Linking premises 2 and 6 makes the argument valid.

Response to an Objection to the Argument

Though my argument is backed by substantial research and has premises that entail the truth of its conclusion, there are still potential objections. One potential objection here is that the legalization of marijuana for medical use by adults could make it more easily accessible for all, thereby resulting in more recreational use, including by teens.

A response to this objection comes from studies that have investigated this very question. Though states have different results, the strongest results come from meta-studies, which can aggregate and analyze the results from many different studies. “A 2018 meta-analysis concluded that the results from previous studies do not lend support to the hypothesis that MMLs [medical marijuana laws] increase marijuana use among youth” (Anderson et al., 2019). In fact, some studies show an actual decline in teen usage after MMLs have been passed, possibly because it becomes “... more difficult for teenagers to obtain marijuana as drug dealers are replaced by licensed dispensaries that require proof of age.” Therefore, the risk of increased use by teens does not seem to be borne out by the scholarly research.

Conclusion

It is my conclusion, therefore, that marijuana use is not safe for adolescents. Though use at a young age can have deleterious health consequences to mental functioning (Meier et al., 2012), use by adults has minimal risks and has benefits that render the risks acceptable (Grant et al., 2003).

It is common for people to be wedded to a position and to seek evidence only to support their side. However, in pursuit of truth, critical thinkers make a point of understanding the best arguments on all sides of important questions. This allows them to be more informed and also more fair-minded, open to changing their views to whichever position most aligns with the best evidence.

A simple concluding paragraph summarizes what has been learned and reaffirms key conclusions. Make sure to address both bullet points.

Include an APA formatted references page with your paper.

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Provide as many references as the assignment instructions state.

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