

FDA: No to Medical Marijuana, Yes to “Super-Vicodin”

BY RUSS BELVILLE · MON NOV 18, 2013

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For years we have been told that raw, crude marijuana plants do not meet the **Food & Drug Administration's** (FDA) guidelines for a safe, effective medicine. Cannabis remains a Schedule I substance, deemed to have no medicinal value, is dangerously addictive and holds a high potential for abuse.

Now, that same FDA has approved a new painkiller called Zohydro. This is a pill that contains 10 times the opioid hydrocodone as found in the often-abused Vicodin. Worse, the drug is the first approved hydrocodone drug that is not cut with acetaminophen or ibuprofen. Unlike the recently reformulated OxyContin, Zohydro does not contain any additives to prevent its users from crushing and snorting or shooting the drug. Abuse concerns led the FDA's Anesthetic and Analgesic Drug Products Advisory Committee to vote 11 to 2 against recommending the drug's approval.

But the FDA approved the drug anyway, even though the Centers for Disease Control tell us fatal overdoses from painkillers are reaching epidemic levels in the United States. A global study published in *The Lancet* found that opioid drugs are the most dangerous in terms of mortality, especially compared to cocaine and marijuana. Americans, comprising less than five percent of the world's population, consume 80% of all opioids and 99% of all hydrocodone.

Also raising eyebrows is the company the FDA has approved to produce this new “Super-Vicodin.” Alkermes. In addition to making this powerfully addictive opioid drug, Alkermes makes the popular naltrexone medication Vivitrol, which is used to treat addictions to... wait for it... opioids. Sure, this may be no more shady than cigarette companies that also sell smoking cessation patches, until you find out that Alkermes also financially supports the American Society of Addiction Medicine, aka Big Rehab.

When **OxyContin** first hit the market there was a big spike in addiction problems and experts believe the release of Zohydro will repeat the devastation. Yet even as the current opioids have led to addiction epidemics, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has approved a 1,500% increase in quotas on hydrocodone manufacturing throughout the medical marijuana era. A DEA rep explained that so many pain pills had to be made because there had to be enough left for legitimate patients after all the recreational users had illegally gotten theirs. Too bad that excuse doesn't work for medical marijuana gardens.

Cannabis has been shown to work synergistically with opioid painkillers to improve the quality of pain relief and reduce the amount of pills needed. Most clients of the Berkeley Patients Group surveyed said using cannabis allowed them to cut their use of prescription pain killers by up to half. But when there's so much money to be made getting people hooked on synthetic heroin, and money to be made on the drug to help them kick it, and money to be made on the rehab treatment, a safer, cheaper, effective, non-addictive herbal alternative is a danger... to your bottom line.