

# World Health Group: Pot's CBD Has Health Benefits

By: Kathleen Doheny

Dec. 15, 2017 -- A compound found in the cannabis plant is not harmful, has health benefits, and does not have abuse potential, experts at the World Health Organization say.

The WHO's Expert Committee on Drug Dependence focused on cannabidiol, or CBD, one of the naturally occurring cannabinoids found in cannabis plants.

After reviewing evidence from animal and human studies, the committee concludes that "In humans, CBD exhibits no effects indicative of any abuse or dependence potential."

The experts also say that CBD might be able to treat epilepsy (where most research has focused), although results are mixed. Other conditions it might treat are Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's, anxiety, depression, and other maladies. CBD may ease inflammation, provide antioxidants, and relieve pain.

Based on its research, the committee concluded that current information does not call for scheduling of the drug. In the U.S., CBD is a Schedule 1 controlled substance. These are defined as drugs with no medical use and likely to be abused.

Twenty-nine states and Washington, D.C., have legalized the use of marijuana for recreational or medicinal purposes. Other states, including Georgia, have legalized the possession of CBD to treat specific disorders.

It remains a federal crime, however, to have or sell any form of marijuana, including CBD. Despite those federal regulations, CBD is an ingredient in popular products sold over the counter as oils, extracts, supplements, and gum to treat many ailments.

CBD usually is given as a capsule or dissolved in liquid to be taken orally, under the tongue, or as a nasal spray. CBD does not produce the high that another cannabinoid -- tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) -- does, experts say. In fact, CBD appears to have effects opposite of THC.

The WHO announcement drew a positive response from marijuana advocates and criticism from those who don't want it to be legal.

The experts produced the report in November, while the WHO announced its conclusions this week. In May, the committee will study cannabis and cannabis-related substances more fully.

Other major studies have shown marijuana and its products can relieve pain, nausea related to cancer treatment, and multiple sclerosis-related muscle spasms. But using

cannabis has well-known short-term and long-term health effects, such as learning and coordination problems.

Because federal law makes it a crime to have marijuana and CBD, researchers must pass strict government scrutiny just to study its usefulness.

### **DEA View of CBD**

The conclusion of the WHO flies in the face of the view of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). It says that CBD must be treated the same as THC and other cannabinoids from a cannabis plant, and it should remain a Schedule I drug.

### **NORML Response**

Marijuana advocates applauded the WHO's conclusion. "It was terrific to see WHO acknowledge what other scientific research has already stated," says Justin Strekal, political director of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML).

In an email statement, he adds: "While we are pleased to see the WHO finally acknowledge that absurdity of international restrictions, the continued domestic classification and criminalization of cannabidiol as a Schedule I controlled substance is out of step with both available science and common sense. It is yet another example of

the U.S. government placing ideology over evidence when it comes to issues related to the cannabis plant.”

### **CALM Response**

Scott Chipman, Southern California chairman of Citizens Against Legalizing Marijuana (CALM), took issue with the report.

"We need to maintain a strict scientific perspective and protocols when it comes to new drugs," he says. "We need double-blind studies related to marijuana and all components, research on the harms versus the benefits, identification of the side effects and specific ailments identified through these studies -- even for CBD," he says.

He says some ongoing drug studies of CBD do show promise in treating seizure disorders, but he also sees potential problems with the drugs, along with concerns about contamination and other potential harms with over-the-counter products.