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# **Prioritize People and their Complexities Over Drugs**

**Carl L. Hart**

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# **High Price** helped me to recognize...

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- **There has never been a drug-free society**
  - it is unlikely that there will ever be one
- **Most decisions to use drugs is as rational as other decisions**
- **75-90% of drug users DO NOT have a problem**

# The points is...

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**If the vast majority of users of a particular drug do not become addicted, then you cannot blame the drug for causing drug addiction**

# If drugs are not the problem, then what is?

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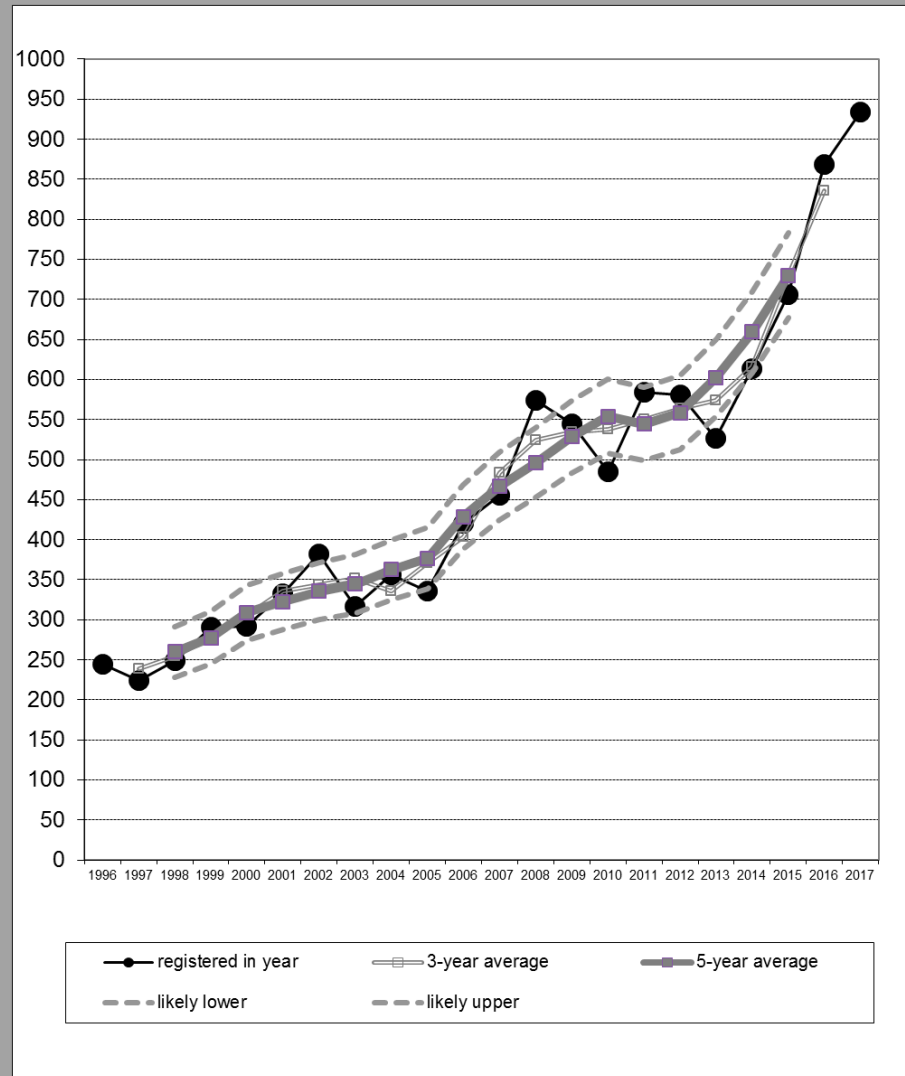
- **Mental Illness**
  - Physical illnesses
- **Poverty**
  - Economically
  - Educationally, skills
- **Subjected to unrealistic expectations**
- **Among other possible reasons**
- **Importantly, all can produce desperation**

# Problem from clients' perspective

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- Increased visibility of drug injecting equipment
- IV drug use occurring in public spaces
  - Eye soar
  - **Desperation can lead to countless problems**
    - » **Increased overdose and health risks, e.g., HIV**

# Drug-related deaths in Scotland



# Overdose is a real concern...

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- But, reasons for overdose not well understood:
  - People rarely die from only heroin (or any other opioid)
  - Most deaths involve multiple drugs
    - » Benzodiazepines (e.g., Xanax, Valium)
    - » Nerve pain medications & anticonvulsants (e.g., gabapentin)
    - » antihistamines (e.g., promethazine)
    - » alcohol

# **Overdose is a real concern...**

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- **But, reasons for overdose not well understood:**
  - **People rarely die from only heroin (or any other opioid)**
  - **Most deaths involve multiple drugs**
  - **Contaminants**



# One Possible Solution in Glasgow is...

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- **...Drug Consumption Rooms**
  - consumption occurs in a monitored & private environment
  - drug-related education disseminated
  - attending to other medical and psychosocial needs
  - **free anonymous drug-purity testing services**

# Another Possible Solution: Scale-up Current Treatments

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- Oral Methadone – sufficient dosing
- Oral Buprenorphine
- Oral Morphine
- **Those for whom this does not work,  
consider IV heroin treatment**

# Heroin-Assisted Treatment

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- **Swiss:** In 1990s, concern about the spread of the HIV virus
- **New bloodborne infections dramatically reduced**
- **Crimes committed by heroin users also went down**
- **Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark have followed Swiss example**

# HAT...lessons

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- **Not a magic bullet, there are none**
  - One of several options
- **Adjunctive therapies critical**
  - attending to other medical and psychosocial needs

# HAT...lessons

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- **Not a magic bullet, there are none**
  - One of several options
- **Adjunctive therapies critical**
  - attending to other medical and psychosocial needs
- **Broadens scope of medications used**
- **Suggest therapeutic value in administering treatment medication by the same route through which the drug is used by patient**

# Increasing Importance of Marijuana

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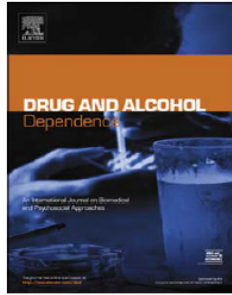
- **Uruguay (2013) & Canada (2018) legalized recreational use**
- **10 states allow adults to purchase and use the substance for recreational purposes**
- **33 states, plus DC, Guam, & Puerto Rico, allow patients to use marijuana for specific medical conditions**



Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](http://www.sciencedirect.com)

# Drug and Alcohol Dependence

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/drugalcdep](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/drugalcdep)



Full length article

## Smoked marijuana attenuates performance and mood disruptions during simulated night shift work



Diana R. Keith<sup>a,1</sup>, Erik W. Gunderson<sup>b</sup>, Margaret Haney<sup>b</sup>, Richard W. Foltin<sup>b</sup>, Carl L. Hart<sup>a,b,c,\*</sup>

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# **Cannabis use causes psychotic disorders?**

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# **Claim: Cannabis use causes psychotic disorders**

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- **True:**

- people diagnosed with psychosis are more likely to report current or prior use of marijuana than people without psychosis

- **Also True:**

- even stronger link between tobacco use and psychosis
- cat ownership in childhood associated with the child later was diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder such as schizophrenia



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

## Schizophrenia Research

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/schres](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/schres)

## Is childhood cat ownership a risk factor for schizophrenia later in life?

E. Fuller Torrey<sup>a,\*</sup>, Wendy Simmons<sup>a</sup>, Robert H. Yolken<sup>b</sup><sup>a</sup> Stanley Medical Research Institute, United States<sup>b</sup> Stanley Laboratory of Developmental Neurovirology, Johns Hopkins University, School of Medicine, United States

Two previous studies suggested that childhood cat ownership is a possible risk factor for later developing schizophrenia or other serious mental illness. We therefore used an earlier, large NAMI questionnaire to try and replicate this finding. The results were the same, suggesting that cat ownership in childhood is significantly more common in families in which the child later becomes seriously mentally ill. If true, an explanatory mechanism may be *Toxoplasma gondii*. We urge our colleagues to try and replicate these findings to clarify whether childhood cat ownership is truly a risk factor for later schizophrenia.

# **Cannabis and Psychosis: a Critical Overview of the Relationship**

Charles Ksir<sup>1</sup> • Carl L. Hart<sup>2,3,4,5</sup>

- **No evidence that cannabis in itself causes a psychosis disorder**

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**Volume 3, No. 5**, p401, May 2016

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## Correlation still does not imply causation

Charles Ksir , Carl L Hart

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**Opinion**  
Cannabis**Carl L Hart and Charles Ksir**

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# Does marijuana use really cause psychotic disorders?

Alex Berenson says the drug causes 'sharp increases in murders and aggravated assaults'. As scientists, we find his claims misinformed and reckless

# Take home message

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- The “drug problem” has little to do with drugs
- When treating addiction look beyond the drug itself
  - as well expanding treatment options
- ...Drug Consumption Rooms should be available in any compassionate society
- Change drug laws
- **PROGRESS IS POSSIBLE**