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Word Generation - Unit 3.17

Focus Words

distribution | outweigh | anecdotal | front | sought



WEEKLY PASSAGE

Danny Miller was 14 years old when he was diagnosed with leukemia, a kind of cancer. He could not sleep or eat because of the pain. He had to take strong medicine to fight the cancer. The medicine made him vomit for hours on end. Danny lost his appetite and became dangerously thin. Doctors tried to make Danny more comfortable by giving him painkillers, but nothing seemed to work. Danny's mom was so concerned about Danny's nausea and weight loss that she suggested to her husband that they give Danny some marijuana. She had heard that it not only reduced nausea but helped give patients their appetites back. Danny's father was shocked. Using marijuana is illegal, and the doctors at the hospital might report them to the police. Danny's mother was so desperate that she **sought** out organizations that would help her acquire some marijuana without getting into trouble. She found such a group in Oregon.

Marijuana has been used as a medicine for about 4,000 years. The debate about the use of marijuana as a medicine is an ongoing one. Medicinal marijuana is legal in California and in a few countries like Canada, Holland, and Spain, but there are laws in these places about its **distribution**. It generally requires a prescription from a doctor.

Supporters argue that both **anecdotal** evidence and research evidence show that medical marijuana is beneficial to some patients. They say that marijuana easily meets the government criteria that a medicine's "benefits to users will **outweigh** its risks." They say that marijuana can be used to ease the discomfort of many illnesses ranging from AIDS to cancer. Supporters point out that some legal prescription drugs have caused the death of some patients; there have been no reported cases of medical marijuana causing death.

Organizations against the use of medical marijuana state that the government has not approved the drug because it is too dangerous. People who oppose medical marijuana also worry that even medicinal use of the drug sends the wrong message to kids. They say marijuana is addictive and can lead to other drug use. They remind us that marijuana injures the lungs and harms the immune system. They argue that the medical marijuana initiative is a **front** for people who are really just using marijuana for fun. They believe that other medications can have the same healing effects as medical marijuana without the dangers.

What do you think? Should marijuana be recognized as proper medical treatment?

Should marijuana be allowed as a medical treatment?

FOCUS WORDS OF THE WEEK

sought : (verb) looked for

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

distribution : (noun) the act of giving out

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

anecdotal : (adjective) related to a brief story about something in a person's life, usually interesting or amusing

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

outweigh : (verb) to be greater than

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

front : (noun) pretended appearance

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

Should marijuana be allowed as a medical treatment?



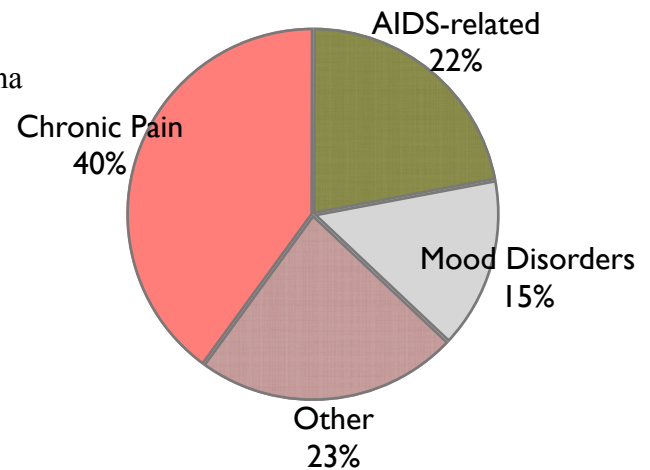
PROBLEM OF THE WEEK

Option 1: Medical marijuana is legal in California. Legislators or lawmakers looked at empirical (concrete or hard) evidence and **anecdotal** evidence of marijuana's benefits for sick people. They also considered the fact that some people might pretend to be sick as a **front** in order to obtain marijuana for recreational use. The legislators decided that the benefits of providing medical marijuana **outweighed** the risks of possible drug abuse.

People who **seek out** medical marijuana fall into several different categories. This graph shows the **distribution** of medical marijuana users. Forty percent of people use medical marijuana for chronic pain. This includes people with arthritis, multiple sclerosis (or M.S), and migraine headaches. What fraction is equal to 40%?

- A) $\frac{1}{4}$
- B) $\frac{4}{9}$
- C) $\frac{2}{5}$
- D) $\frac{40}{10}$

California Medical Marijuana Use



Option 2: After California legalized medical marijuana, stores called “dispensaries” now **distribute** marijuana to people who have a doctor’s prescription for the drug. Occasionally, government agents have **sought** to enforce federal anti-marijuana laws by raiding dispensaries and making arrests. The Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) cited **anecdotes** of doctors who wrote thousands of marijuana prescriptions. Federal officials claimed these medical dispensaries were a **front** for selling a drug that was being used recreationally most of the time. They said that the need to enforce federal laws banning marijuana **outweighed** the benefits of marijuana to legitimate medical users.

One expert estimated that in 2006, Californians grew 20 million marijuana plants. He estimated the street value of the crop at 14 billion dollars. If he is correct, about how many dollars worth of marijuana does each plant produce? (Hint: use exponents!)

Math Discussion Question: People who **seek** to buy medical marijuana range from cancer patients who are truly suffering to people who pretend to have headaches as a **front** to get a recreational drug. What do you find more troubling: **anecdotes** about suffering people who are denied the marijuana that could make them feel better, or anecdotes about people who lie to get marijuana that they use for fun? Should doctors who **distribute** thousands of medical marijuana prescriptions be investigated? Do the abuses of the system **outweigh** the benefits that medical marijuana can provide?



Is marijuana more likely to be abused by teens in states where cannabis is legally distributed for medical use?

THINKING SCIENTIFICALLY

Ms. Kahn's Life Science class was studying the human nervous system and the conversation turned to chronic pain (pain that continues over a long period of time). "My grandfather has chronic pain from cancer in his bladder," said Mario. "He **sought** help from his doctor. The doctor gave him a prescription for medical cannabis—or marijuana—to relieve the pain, and it's helping a lot. I read that now, in 2012, thousands of people legally smoke or eat cannabis to help reduce chronic pain. Cannabis is legally **distributed** in 17 states and in Washington, D.C."

"Wait a minute," said Alyssia. "Marijuana may help a few people, but it's a terrible drug for kids who abuse it. That problem **outweighs** the benefits that some people get. Legalizing marijuana is a **front** to make it easier for teens to smoke it!"

Mario disagreed. "Medical cannabis has been legal here for two years, and I know a couple teens who quit using marijuana. So there is a correlation between legal medical cannabis and a drop in teens smoking marijuana."

"Two people? Those are just **anecdotal** stories, not real evidence," answered Alyssia.

→ Mario and Alyssia decided to work together to find statistics that might help resolve their disagreement. On the Web site ProCon.org, they found the following data about teen marijuana use from 1999 and 2006:

How does legalizing medical marijuana affect teen use of marijuana?

Note: Marijuana use in these statistics refers to "past-month" use. That is, a survey or interview question asks something like, "Have you used marijuana in the past month?"

TABLE #1 Percent of teens reporting marijuana use from 1999 to 2006

	1999	2006	Change
States with legal medical marijuana	8.96 %	8.45%	- 0.51%
States without legal medical marijuana	7.81%	6.71%	- 1.10%

TABLE #2 Change in teen use of marijuana in the 10 states that had legal medical marijuana as of 2006

State (year legalized)	Increase or decrease from 1999-2006
Alaska (1999)	↓ decrease
California (1996)	↓ decrease
Colorado (2000)	↓ decrease
Hawaii (2000)	↓ decrease
Maine (1999)	increase ↑
Montana (2004)	↓ decrease
Nevada (2000)	↓ decrease
Oregon (1998)	↓ decrease
Vermont (2004)	increase ↑
Washington (1996)	↓ decrease

TABLE #3 The 10 states with the highest percent of teens who reported past-month marijuana use in 2006

State	Teen marijuana use	Medical marijuana
Maine	10.99%	legal
Montana	10.56%	legal
Vermont	10.08%	legal
Rhode Island	9.74%	illegal
Massachusetts	8.96%	illegal
Connecticut	8.40%	illegal
Oregon	8.36%	legal
Alaska	8.26%	legal
New Hampshire	8.21%	illegal
New York	7.81%	illegal

By pointing to data in Table #1, Mario argued that in states where medical use of cannabis was legal, the percent of teen users decreased. But Alyssia used the same table to argue that legalizing medical cannabis actually caused an increase in teenagers' abuse of marijuana. What valid conclusions do you think can be drawn from Table #1?

Use evidence from all three tables to argue that either Mario is correct, or Alyssia is correct, or perhaps that both are correct.

Should marijuana be allowed as a medical treatment?

DEBATING THE ISSUE



I. Get ready...

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

A Medical marijuana should be made completely legal just like aspirin. It has been used as a treatment for the symptoms of many diseases from AIDS to cancer.

B Medical marijuana should not be legal. There are other legal drugs available that can be used.

C Medical marijuana treatments should be legal and carefully controlled just like other prescription drugs. Thousands of people die from prescription drugs each year but there has not been a single report of a death caused by the use of medical marijuana.

D Medical marijuana should not be legal. Smoking marijuana harms the lungs and the immune system and can also lead to the use of other drugs. It is too dangerous to be used.

E _____

2. Get set...

Be ready to provide evidence to back up your position during your class discussion or debate. Jot down a few quick notes:

GO!

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.

...because...

I disagree with part of that...

An example might help convince me. Can you give me an example?

What part of the passage makes you think that?



Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples.
Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

distribution | outweigh | anecdotal | front | sought

[illegible]