

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **USA Surgeon General confirms Doctors For Life International's (DFL) stance on dagga.**

The USA Surgeon General Jerome Adams made a stunning series of announcements alongside some of the USA's top public health officials regarding the dangers of dagga (cannabis or marijuana), particularly for pregnant women and youth. DFL was delighted and encouraged that he virtually point for point echoed our position, which we maintained in the Gauteng Supreme Court.

Doctors For Life is therefore increasingly disappointed in the South African Constitutional Court's decision to allow cannabis use in a private setting without being properly informed about the science. We believe South Africa stands at the threshold of making too hasty decisions based on popular feeling often driven by selfish interests and advocacy, rather than medical science.

At a press conference in Washington, officials discussed the first Surgeon General's Advisory on pot since 1982. In the advisory the Surgeon General said that science indicates that in fact "the actual potential harm is increasing", not becoming less as some proponents like to claim. "As the Nation's doctor, I'm proud to stand with you & sound a national alarm on the harmful effects of marijuana use on the developing brain" said Surgeon General, & Vice Admiral Jerome Adams.

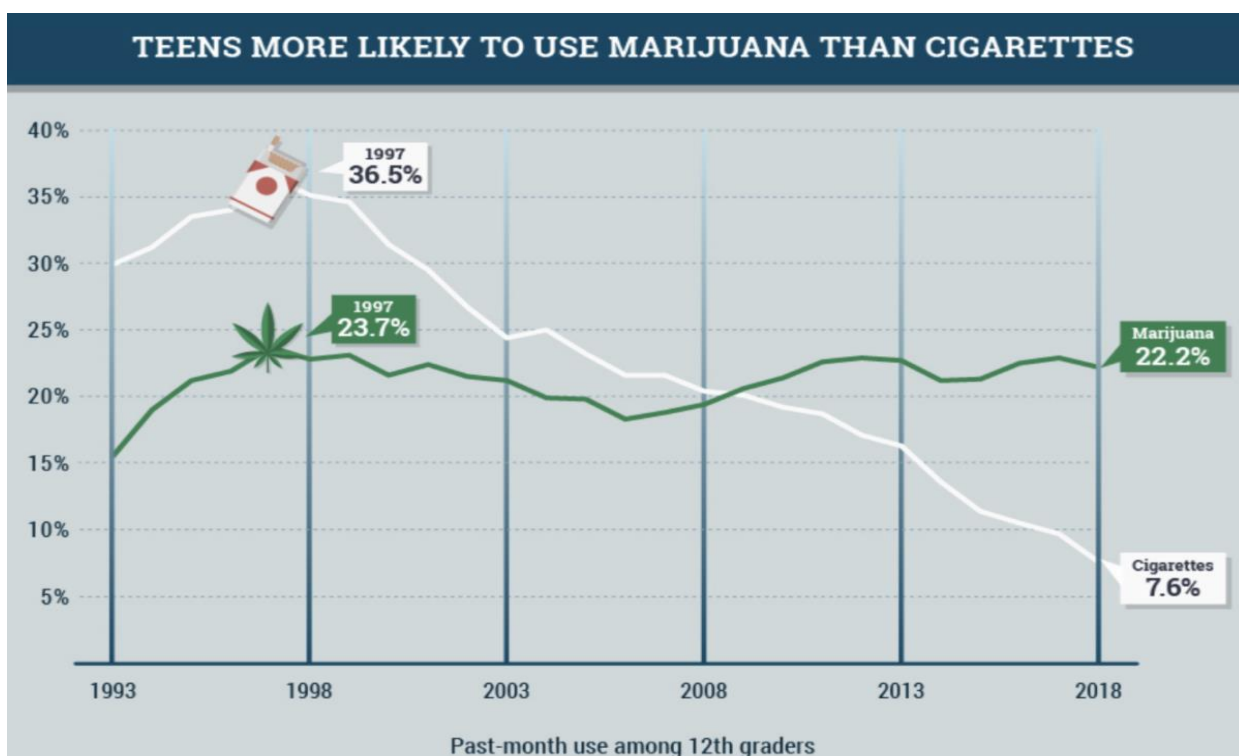
The most important statements made in the advisory were:

- 1) "We need to make it clear that some State's laws on Marijuana may have changed, but the Science has not & Federal Law has not." said Secretary General of the USA's Department of Health & Human Services (HSS), Alex Azar.
- 2) There is no approved use for Marijuana to treat any medical condition.
- 3) Moreover, "because the concentration of THC in Marijuana has tripled over the past few decades, the Science suggest the Marijuana use carries more risks than ever."
- 4) "Marijuana is linked to a risk for and a chronic onset of psychotic disorders, such as schizophrenia, & the association strengthens with more frequent use, stronger THC content & earlier 1st use."

- 5) There is an increase in Emergency Department visits for psychosis, overdose.
- 6) Youth regularly using Marijuana are more likely to show a decline in IQ, school performance and more apt to miss classes and drop out.

Some other key points that were made at the event included:

- Marijuana is an addictive dangerous drug.
- THC concentration in marijuana has tripled over the past decades, science suggest its use carries more risks than ever.
- Between 2002 and 2017, marijuana use in pregnant women during the past month doubled as perceived harmfulness declined.
- Marijuana is now the most commonly used drug among pregnant women.
- In 2017, more than 9 million youth reported marijuana use in the prior month.



*Above: Statistics courtesy of Smart Approaches to Marijuana (SAM)*

- Science shows people that regular users are more likely to attempt suicide.
- Nearly 1 in 5 people who began Marijuana use during adolescence, will become addicted.  
In 2017, new users between the ages of 12 and 25 rose by about 30%.
- Marijuana use during pregnancy can affect the baby's brain & also result in lower birth weight, a marker for early death & disability.
- Marijuana can affect brain development & cause deficiencies in attention, memory, decision making & motivation.

“The Advisory, like all of our work on substance abuse, is grounded in the best Science we have.” said Secretary General Alex Azar.

SG Adams also said there is “a mounting body of evidence upon us”. “It is a dangerous drug,” and there is “a great & rising concern about the rapid normalization of Marijuana use & the impact that a false perception of its risks, is having on our young people & pregnant women” said the top doctor of the country who is a qualified Anaesthesia Pain Medicines Specialist and is also a father of 3.

It is therefore with great concern that Doctors For Life would like to issue a special warning to all South Africans, especially our Law Makers about the immense dangers and harmfulness of Dagga.

DFL would like to make it clear that we are still available to assist government to draw up sound legislation on the use and experimentation of dagga/cannabis

[Read the Surgeon General's Advisory HERE.](#)

[Watch the full announcement HERE.](#)

Doctors for Life International represents over 1500 medical doctors and specialists, three-quarters of whom practice in South Africa. Since 1991 DFL has been actively promoting sound science in the medical profession and health care that is safe and efficient for all South Africans. For more information visit: <http://www.doctorsforlife.co.za>

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