

The Greater Good or the lesser Evil? David Christopher, M.H.

I recently received an interesting call. A man called on behalf of his wife asking if it was safe for her to take St. John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) herb while she was pregnant. I assume that he expected a simple yes or no answer because he was put off by my not so simple reply of, "It depends."

He gruffly asked, "Depends on what?"

I then asked, "Why is she taking St. John's wort and is it helping her?" He explained that she was feeling depressed and that it was helping. I told him she should continue taking the herb. He was relieved by what I said. He related that three other herbalists had answered no and that she



should not take St. John's wort during pregnancy. They decided that if I also answered no, then they would take the advice of her OB/GYN and start her on Prozac right away. I was stunned that anyone would consider taking this class of drugs. The side effects are many and serious. There is even a black box warning that reads: "May cause suicidal tendencies." I thought to myself, "Are these other herbalists crazy?" Or maybe they didn't consider the ramifications of the alternative medicines. There are no commercially sold herbs as dangerous as the safest drug. This was not even a choice between the greater good or the lesser evil; it was a choice between good and evil.

Herbs have proven their safety and efficacy *in vivo* for thousands of years. Drugs are tested *in vitro*, then *in vivo* in rats and then in narrow controlled human trials. After *in vivo* testing they are released to the general public but, many are pulled within decades because of the many side effects and deaths that they cause.

I also received a call from a man whose daughter is suffering from uncontrollable seizures. He asked my opinion on cannabis oil and my mind was immediately drawn to the St. John's wort experience. I thought, "Should I simply tell him that it is illegal and regurgitate the anti-cannabis rhetoric?" Instead I simply said, "It depends." No one can get addicted to medicinal cannabis oil, especially if it is lacking THC. However, the insane hoops the government demands that people jump through in order to obtain this effective oil is criminal and might not be worth the costs in health for the child or sanity for the parents. He is from Utah, a state that demands they go through a neurologist, and that the doctor must try all available drugs first, with their accompanying and devastating side effects. He didn't want his child subjected to the available drugs and their side effects. I then let him know that cannabis was not the only plant that can be used for seizures. I informed him that Dr. Christopher

developed an herbal extract consisting of Black cohosh, Blue cohosh, Blue vervain, Skullcap and Lobelia. This nerve combination has had miraculous effects on every condition from epilepsy to Tourette's syndrome.

I believe that cannabis is definitely a medicinal plant with a myriad of uses. There are 20 states that allow access to cannabis. Therefore, if it is legal, it is a legitimate option -- especially over drugs. However, a good herbalist can always find other medicinal plants to use instead of cannabis and its myriad of uses.

Post Script: Nature provides natural opioid compounds for pain relief as is evidenced in the poppy plant, which is banned in the USA. However, the synthetic compounds derived from this poppy are available and numerous including the highly addictive hydrocodone, OxyContin and the ubiquitous heroine, the pharmaceutical answer to opioid addiction.

PSS: A recent study from JAMA Internal Medicine found that the 13 States with medical marijuana laws between 1999 and 2010 had a 25% lower opioid-related death rate than the states where marijuana remained illegal. The longer the laws remained in effect the greater the reduction. It appears that the evil marijuana plant is less evil than the evil heroine and OxyContin.