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Medical marijuana is a big step toward legalizing pot

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There are two fundamental questions to ask about the [medical marijuana bill passed by the D.C. Council](#) [Metro, April 21]: (1) Is smoke a safe drug delivery system? and (2) Is it safe to approve drugs, especially those with high abuse potential, by ballot initiatives and legislative actions? Any sensible person would answer "no" to both questions.

If any chemical in marijuana were shown to be safe and effective for any illness or disorder, it would be used by a safe delivery system in controlled doses. This is true for dronabinol, a synthetic version of the active ingredient in marijuana, which has been available since the late 1980s. And yet medical marijuana advocates seek only to obtain access to smoked marijuana.

Medical marijuana is a stalking-horse for legalization. This can be seen in California, where medical marijuana advocates have had great success and are pushing for full legalization. But it is not a smart public health strategy. Marijuana is the most commonly abused illegal drug and is second only to alcohol as the leading cause of substance dependence in the United States.

Any financial benefits reaped from taxed and regulated marijuana will be greatly overshadowed by the adverse consequences of its use, as is true for alcohol and tobacco, two taxed and regulated substances of abuse.

Approving medicines should be left to the Food and Drug Administration. It would be unfortunate if the District fell under the spell of medical marijuana advocates on the road to a push for marijuana legalization.

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