



BREAKING NEWS ALERT

STATEMENT ON SANJAY GUPTA AND CNN COVERAGE OF MARIJUANA

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[August 9, 2013] - Project SAM (Smart Approaches to Marijuana), an alliance of organizations and individuals, including medical professionals from Harvard Medical School, Children's Hospital Boston, University of Colorado, University of Kansas, the American Society of Addiction Medicine, and leaders from other major public health groups, released a statement today, through SAM Director Dr. Kevin Sabet, about CNN's Sanjay Gupta's apparent "reversal" on marijuana:

"Dr. Gupta is a medical professional we highly respect, whose judgment and views are listened to by millions of Americans. But his turnaround on marijuana seems to be based on marijuana's potential medical value, rather than on a desire to legalize marijuana outright.

"So far as we know, Dr. Gupta has not endorsed legalization, a policy all major public health groups, including the American Medical Association and American Public Health Association, also do not endorse. Project SAM opposes legalization primarily because of the new Big Marijuana industry that will commercialize the drug for profits.

"In this country, there is major confusion between the medicinal application of the constituents in marijuana (e.g. CBD, a non-intoxicating element found in marijuana) and the use of smoked, street-bought marijuana consumed for the purposes of getting intoxicated (which is uniformly high THC/low CBD). We are troubled that some of CNN's coverage of Dr. Gupta's views muddies the water on this issue. For example, a headline stemming from Dr. Gupta's upcoming documentary on CNN.com today is entitled 'Marijuana stops child's severe seizures'. However, this story is about a child who is benefiting from a

non-smoked marijuana extract that does not get her high since it does not contain marijuana's active ingredient, THC. But since most Americans think of marijuana as the THC-filled smoked substance, this headline is misleading. It would be like saying 'opium cures pain for millions of people' instead of acknowledging that Morphine, an extract of opium, is the substance at play.

"Just because marijuana is a Schedule I drug, it does not mean that medicines based on certain parts of the marijuana plant cannot be approved in the US. We fully agree with Dr. Gupta that the medicinal value of marijuana should be studied in order to develop pharmacy-obtained, legitimate, standardized, non-smoked medications.

"Dr. Gupta is a person America looks up to with high esteem. And for good reason - he is thoughtful, thorough, and dispassionate about the science. That is why we are troubled by how people might interpret his comments: as a license to support legalization, when in fact it seems he is simply arguing for the need to study marijuana's medicinal value and end the demonization associated with marijuana. Project SAM agrees with those ends too, and urges the media to correctly cover this story."

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Drug Free Action Alliance is an Ohio SAM Affiliate



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