Bhang or Marijuana is Legal in Ayurvedic Prescription

KK AGGARWAL*, IRA GUPTA†

A drug can be available in Ayurvedic preparations but not approved in modern medicine.

Marijuana is another name for cannabis obtained from the Cannabis plant, *Cannabis sativa*. It is mainly used as charas, hashish, ganja and bhang.

The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985 has defined cannabis as below:

"(iii) "cannabis (hemp)" means-

(a) charas, that is, the separated resin, in whatever form, whether crude or purified, obtained from the cannabis plant and also includes concentrated preparation and resin known as hashish oil or liquid hashish;

(b) ganja, that is, the flowering or fruiting tops of the cannabis plant (excluding the seeds and leaves when not accompanied by the tops), by whatever name they may be known or designated; and

(c) any mixture, with or without any neutral material, of any of the above forms of cannabis or any drink prepared therefrom."

Bhang is prepared from the leaves (and seeds) of the cannabis plant. Hence, it is not covered under the NDPS Act, 1985, which bans the production and sale of cannabis resin and flowers, but permits use of leaves and seeds.

Mixing of bhang with any part of flowering tops or the resin produced from the cannabis plants; however, is a punishable offence under relevant provisions of the NDPS Act, 1985.

The National Policy on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances allows cultivation of cannabis, with permit, for purposes of research and not for medical purposes. "Cultivation of cannabis will not be permitted given its limited proven uses for medical purposes. Cultivation shall be permitted for research including trials of various varieties of cannabis (20)."

"Section 14 of the NDPS Act empowers the Government to, by general or special order, permit cultivation of cannabis exclusively for horticultural and industrial purposes (23)."

The medical use of marijuana is much debated in modern medicine. Medical marijuana refers to using the whole, unprocessed marijuana plant or its basic extracts. It is not yet approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as a safe and effective drug for any indication, although many states in the United States have legalized marijuana for medical purposes. However, FDA has approved one medication, which contains the purified substance cannabidiol for the treatment of seizures associated with Lennox-Gastaut syndrome or Dravet syndrome in patients 2 years of age and older. https://www.fda.gov/news-events/public-health-focus/fda-and-marijuana

Medicinal cannabinoids, including medicinal cannabis and pharmaceutical cannabinoids and their synthetic derivatives, such as tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD), have been suggested to have a therapeutic role in certain mental disorders. However, a recent review and meta-analysis analyzing the available evidence to ascertain the effectiveness and safety of all types of medicinal cannabinoids in treating symptoms of various mental disorders concluded that there is scarce evidence to suggest that cannabinoids improve depressive disorders and symptoms, anxiety disorders, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, Tourette syndrome, post-traumatic stress disorder or psychosis (Lancet Psychiatry. 2019 Oct 25. pii: S2215-0366(19)30401-8. doi: 10.1016/S2215-0366(19)30401-8).

A Right to Information (RTI) application was filed to know about the items included in marijuana and whether it can be used for medicinal purposes in India (see Appendices 1 and 2).

As of today, marijuana is not approved as a drug by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO). But it is used regularly in Ayurveda.

Its therapeutic uses are for:
- **Agnimandya** (in which food is not properly digested due to the diminished power of Jatharagni)
- **Atisara** (acute diarrhea)
- **Grahaniroga** (irritable bowel syndrome)
- **Klaibya** (erectile dysfunction)
- **Anidra** (insomnia).

It is prescribed in a dose of 125-250 mg of the drug in powder form.

As per Ayurvedic Pharmacopoeia Part-I, Volume-I, bhang is Vijaya and consists of dried leaves of cultivated or wild plants of *Cannabis sativa* Linn. (Fam Cannabaceae).

In Ayurveda, it has different names are Bhanga, Madani, Bhan, Sidhi, Indian Hemp, Bhaang, Bhang, Bhangigida, Ganjagida, Pang, Bangi, Kanchavu, Garja, Ganjie and Qinaab.

Table summarizes the information in the replies received in response to the RTI (see Appendices 3 and 4).

Till marijuana is made legal in modern medicine, doctors can co-consult Ayurvedic practitioners and let the patient avail the benefits.

### RTI Reply in Marijuana (Bhang)

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>What all items are included in marijuana? Provide the details.</td>
<td>As per Ayurvedic Pharmacopoeia Part-I, Volume-I reflecting details about the Bhang (<em>Cannabis sativa</em>) and National Institute of Drug Abuse (URL: <a href="https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/marijuana/what-marijuana">https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/marijuana/what-marijuana</a>).</td>
<td>CDSCO regulates safety, efficacy and quality of the drugs, medical devices and cosmetics under the provisions of Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 &amp; Rules, made thereunder. Marijuana has not been approved as drug by CDSCO.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Can marijuana be used for medicinal purpose?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>If answer to query no. 1 is “Yes”, then please provide the details of the medicinal purpose for marijuana can be used.</td>
<td><strong>Important Formulations</strong>&lt;br&gt;Jatiphaladi churna, Madanananda modaka.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>If answer to query no. 1 is “No”, then please provide the details of the authority to which the misuse and illegal use of marijuana can be reported.</td>
<td><strong>Therapeutic Uses</strong>&lt;br&gt;Agnimandya, Atisara, Grahanrioga, Klaibya, Anidra&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Dose:</strong>&lt;br&gt;125-250 mg of the drug in powder form</td>
<td>Misuse and illegal use of marijuana can be reported to Central Bureau of Narcotics, 19, The Mall, Morar, Gwalior - 474006, Madhya Pradesh, India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Is there any expert committee looking into the use of marijuana in the country?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Is bhang or cannabis leaves used in Ayurveda or any other stream of AYUSH for any medical purpose?</td>
<td>As per Ayurvedic Pharmacopoeia Part-I, Volume-I bhang is:&lt;br&gt;Vijaya consists of dried leaves of cultivated or wild plants of <em>Cannabis sativa</em> Linn. (Fam Cannabaceae); an annual erect, dioecious herb, 1-2 m high, found almost throughout the year; practically naturalized in the Sub-Himalayan tracts in India and abundantly found in waste lands from Punjab eastwards to Bengal and extending Southwards.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If answer to query no. 7 is "Yes", then provide the list of medicines where it is used.

**Important Formulations**
Jatiphaladi churna, Madanananda modaka.

**Therapeutic Uses**
Agnimandya, Alisara, Grahaniroga, Klaibya, Anidra

**Dose:**
125-250 mg of the drug in powder form
Ref. No.: HCFI/August/2019/13
Date: 12.8.2019
To,
Public Information Officer
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
FDA Bhawan, ITO
New Delhi
Subject: Application under Right to Information Act, 2005

Dear Sir,

Kindly provide the following information under the provisions of Right to Information Act, 2005:

1. What all items are included in marijuana? Provide the details.
2. Can marijuana be used for medicinal purpose?
3. If answer to query no. 1 is “Yes”, then please provide the details of the medicinal purpose for which marijuana can be used.
4. If answer to query no. 1 is “No”, then please provide the details of the authority to which the misuse and illegal use of marijuana can be reported.
5. If there any expert committee looking into the use of marijuana in the country?
6. If answer to query no. 3 is “Yes”, then please provide the details of the said expert committee.

You are kindly requested to provide the above information to the undersigned either by email or speed post at the address mentioned below.

The requisite fee of Rs. 10/- is enclosed with the application vide postal order no. 194853. Applicant undertakes to pay any additional fee in accordance with law. I state that the information sought does not fall within the restrictions contained in Section 8 of the Act and to the best of my knowledge it pertains to your office.

Thanking You,

Yours truly,

Dr. K K Aggarwal
Padma Shree Awardee
President-Heart Care Foundation of India

Ira Gupta
Advocate
Legal Advisor - Heart Care Foundation of India
Appendix 2

Helpline No: 9958771117

Only NGOs to have two National Ps Commemorative Stamps & one St Postal Cancelation Stamp released in events

Clinical Book of Record Holder in CPF

Founders
Mrs Pushpa Chopra
Dr (Col) K L Chopra
Sh G L Sanghi

Chairman
Dr Deepak Chopra

President
Dr K K Aggarwal
Recipient of Padma Shri, Vishwak Hindi Samman,
National Science Communication Award
DR B C Ray National Award
Gold Medalist

Head Office
A-548, Aisle Village, K P Trilokpur Bio
New Delhi - 110049
Mobile: 9911090209
E-mail: info@hcfi.org

Major Initiatives
- HCFI Samaer Malik Fund: Initiative to provide technical financial support for patients in need of heart care interventions
- HCFI CPR 10: Training program revival after sudden cardiac arrest
- HCFI Perfect Health Mela: A community event which is instillation as a medium of health awareness
- HCFI Heart 2 Heart: An initiative to raise health awareness amongst masses
- HCFI Legal Cell: (Equality, Just, Equity) - To fight for Health Rights
- HCFI Round Table for Heart Wellness (Building Consensus)
- Dr K K Aggarwal Charity for Heart Medical Research

Registered u/s 12A of the IT Act

Objectives and activities of the Trust are framed within the meaning of section 2(15) of the IT Act, 1961
All Donations exempted under Section 80G of IT Act (1961)

Ref. No.: HCFI/August/2019/14
Date: 12.8.2019

To,
Public Information Officer
Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers
Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi

Subject: Application under Right to Information Act, 2008

Dear Sir,

Kindly provide the following information under the provisions of Right to Information Act, 2005:

1. What all items are included in marijuana? Provide the details.

2. Can marijuana be used for medicinal purpose?

3. If answer to query no. 1 is “Yes”, then please provide the details of the medicinal purpose for which marijuana can be used.

4. If answer to query no. 1 is “No”, then please provide the details of the authority to which the misuse and illegal use of marijuana can be reported.

5. If there any expert committee looking into the use of marijuana in the country?

6. If answer to query no. 3 is “Yes”, then please provide the details of the said expert committee.

You are kindly requested to provide the above information to the undersigned either by email or speed post at the address mentioned below.

The requisite fee of Rs. 10/- is enclosed with the application vide postal order no. 473

Applicant undertakes to pay any additional fee in accordance with law. I state that the information sought does not fall within the restrictions contained in Section 8 of the Act and to the best of my knowledge it pertains to your office.

Thanking You,

Yours truly,

Dr. K K Aggarwal
Padma Shri Awardee
President-Heart Care Foundation of India

Ira Gupta, Advocate
Legal Advisor - Heart Care Foundation of India
Appendix 3

RTI Matter/Time Bound

T.19011/03/2019-DCC(AYUSH)
Government of India
Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (AYUSH)

AYUSH BHAWAN
‘B’ Block, GPO Complex,
INA, New Delhi-110023
Dated: 16th September, 2019

To,
Mr. K. K. Aggarwal,
Heart Care Foundation of India,
A 344, Asiad Village, K P Thakkar Block,
New Delhi-110049
Email- emedinevy@gmail.com

Subject: Offline RTI application AYUSH/R/2019/00285, 19.08.2019 (received in this Section on 21.09.2019) and Online RTI application AYUSH/R/2019/80099 dated 26.08.2019 (transferred from Department of Fertilisers) for seeking information under RTI Act, 2005-reg.

Sir,

Please refer to your two RTI applications mentioned above. In this regard information available in Ministry of AYUSH is as under:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.N.</th>
<th>Information Sought</th>
<th>Text for Reply</th>
</tr>
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<td>1.</td>
<td>What all items are included in marijuana? Provide the details.</td>
<td>Information available in Ayurvedic Pharmacopoeia Part-I, Volume-1 reflecting details about the Bhang (Cannabis satius) and information available on the website of National Institute of Drug Abuse [URL: <a href="https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/marijuana/what-marijuana">https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/marijuana/what-marijuana</a>] is enclosed for your reference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Can marijuana be used for medicinal purpose?</td>
<td>Misuse and illegal use of Marijuana can be reported to CENTRAL BUREAU OF NARCOTICS, 19, The Mall, Morar, Gwalior - 474 006 Madhya Pradesh, India.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>If answer to query no. 1 is &quot;Yes&quot;, then please provide the details of the medicinal purpose for which marijuana can be used.</td>
<td>Information available as mentioned in Ayurvedic Pharmacopoeia Part-I, Volume-1 reflecting details about the Bhang (Cannabis satius) is enclosed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>If answer to query no. 1 is &quot;No&quot;, then please provide the details of the authority to which the misuse and illegal use of marijuana can be reported.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>If there any expert committee looking into the use of marijuana in the country?</td>
<td>NIL information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>If answer to query no. 5 is &quot;Yes&quot;, then please provide the details of the said expert committee.</td>
<td>NIL information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Is bhang or cannabis leaves used in Ayurveda or any other stream of AYUSH for any medical purpose?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>If answer to query no. 7 is &quot;Yes&quot;, then provide the list of medicines where it is used.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. The particulars of the Appellate Authority are:
Dr. D.C. Katash, Advisor (Ayurveda), Ministry of AYUSH, AYUSH Bhawan, B-Block, GPO Complex, INA, New Delhi-110023.

Encl.: As above

(Dr. Muzammil Rehman)
CP IO
Tel.: 011-24655637

Copy to:
Section Officer (Smt. Sushma Jas), RTI Cell, Ministry of AYUSH in reference to subject mentioned RTI application of Dr. K.K. Agrawal, with a request to update the status in the RTI website.

IJCP SUTRA: "Avoid stress, excessive humidity, heat and tight clothes and use moisturizers, sun block and wear the right type of clothes, which absorb sweat and keep the body cool."
Marijuana

What is marijuana?

Marijuana—also called weed, herb, pot, grass, bud, ganja, Mary Jane, and a vast number of other slang terms—is a greenish-gray mixture of the dried flowers of *Cannabis sativa*. Some people smoke marijuana in hand-rolled cigarettes called *joints*; in pipes, water pipes (sometimes called *bongs*), or in *blunts* (marijuana rolled in cigar wraps). Marijuana can also be used to brew tea and, particularly when it is sold or consumed for medicinal purposes, is frequently mixed into foods (edibles) such as brownies, cookies, or candies. Vaporizers are also increasingly used to consume marijuana. Stronger forms of marijuana include sinsemilla (from specially tended female plants) and concentrated resins containing high doses of marijuana’s active ingredients, including honeylike *hash oil*, waxy *budder*, and hard amberlike *shatter*. These resins are increasingly popular among those who use them both recreationally and medically.

The main psychoactive (mind-altering) chemical in marijuana, responsible for most of the intoxicating effects that people seek, is *delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol* (THC). The chemical is found in resin produced by the leaves and buds primarily of the female cannabis plant. The plant also contains more than 500 other chemicals, including more than 100 compounds that are chemically related to THC, called *cannabinoids*.

*This page was last updated July 2019*

Was this article helpful?

Yes  No
Appendix 4

Z-28020/524/2019-DC
Directorate General of Health Services
Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation
(RTI CELL)

FDA Bhawan, Kotla Road,
New Delhi
Date: 20/09/2019

To,
Dr. KK Aggarwal,
Heart Care Foundation of India,
A 344, Asiad Village, K P Thakkar Block,
New Delhi-110049

Sub: Information under RTI Act, 2005 - Reg.

Sir,
Please refer to your RTI applications Ref. No. HCFI/August/2019/13 dated 12.08.2019 received in this office on dated 20.08.2019 for providing information under RTI Act, 2005.

In this regard, the reply is as under:

Point No. 1 to 6: CDSCO regulates safety, efficacy and quality of the drugs, medical devices and cosmetics under the provisions of Drugs & Cosmetic Act, 1940 & Rules, made there under. Marijuana has not been approved as drug by CDSCO. This office has no further information.

Also, your RTI is being transfer to the CPIO, Narcotics Control Bureau under Section 6(3) of RTI Act, 2005 with a request to provide available information, if any, directly to the applicant.

Yours Faithfully,

Encl: As stated above

(Jayant Kumar)
Deputy Drugs Controller (I) & CPIO

Copy for information and further necessary action to:-
1. The CPIO, Dy. Director (P&C), Narcotics Control Bureau, West Block-1, Wing-5, Sector-1, R.K. Pura, New Delhi-110066.

Address of first appellate authority is as below:
Sh. A. K. Pradhan,
Deputy Drugs Controller (India),
FDA Bhawan, Opp. Mata Sundri College,
Kotla Road, New Delhi – 110002

LJCP SUTRA: “Patients should also maintain good hygiene to prevent flare ups.”