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# Drugs and Driving in 2017: Issues and Developments

Third International Symposium on Drugs and Driving

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# Overview

## Six current issues

- **Legalization of Cannabis**
- **Per se Laws**
- **Oral Fluid Screening**
- **Assessing Impairment**
- **Police Training**
- **Public Education and Awareness**





# Legalization of Cannabis



- ❑ Cannabis has been used for centuries
- ❑ 20<sup>th</sup> Century saw it widely prohibited
- ❑ Citizen advocacy pushed for legal access for medical purposes
- ❑ Opened the door for legal access to cannabis for recreational purposes
- ❑ Several U.S. states have legalized cannabis
- ❑ Canada – July, 2018

**But...**

*Cannabis is not a benign drug: there are risks and harms associated with its use*



# Cannabis Use and Driving

- **Among young drivers, driving after using cannabis is more prevalent than driving after drinking**
- **Cannabis impairs the cognitive and motor abilities necessary to operate a motor vehicle and doubles the risk of crash involvement**
- **After alcohol, cannabis is the most commonly detected substance among drivers who die in traffic crashes**



# Per se Laws

- Alcohol per se limits set a standard above which it is illegal to operate a vehicle
- Based on research evidence
- Legal shortcut
- Continued discussion of the most appropriate limit
- Several different limits – 0, 40, 50, 80, 160

*Is there an appropriate limit for cannabis?*

Maximum

**50**

mg/dL  
BAC

Maximum

**5**

ng/mL THC



# Drug Screening: What are the Options?

- Blood
- Urine
- Breath
- Sweat
- Oral Fluid





# Oral Fluid Screening



- **Roadside alcohol testing is commonplace**
- **Police looking for a similar device for drugs**

- **Challenges:**

- **Numerous drugs**
- **Medium**
- **Detect presence – not level**
- **How do we employ them?**
- **Detect presence – not impairment**





# Assessing Impairment

- **Drug Impairment doesn't necessarily look like alcohol impairment**
- **Will the same techniques and tools work?**
- **Standardized Field Sobriety Test**
- **Field Impairment Test**





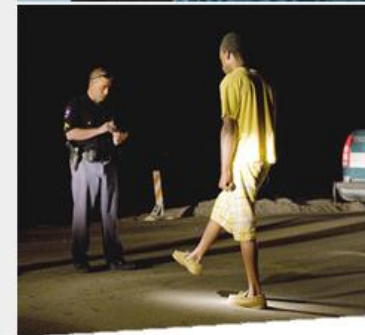


# Effects of Cannabis Use

- **Acute effects include:**
  - **feelings of euphoria and relaxation**
  - **changes in perception, time distortion**
  - **deficits in attention span, concentration and executive functioning**
  - **reduced ability to divide attention**
  - **impairments to coordination and balance**
  - **increased heart rate and blood pressure**
  - **dilated pupils, red eyes, dry mouth and throat**

# Assessing Drug Impairment

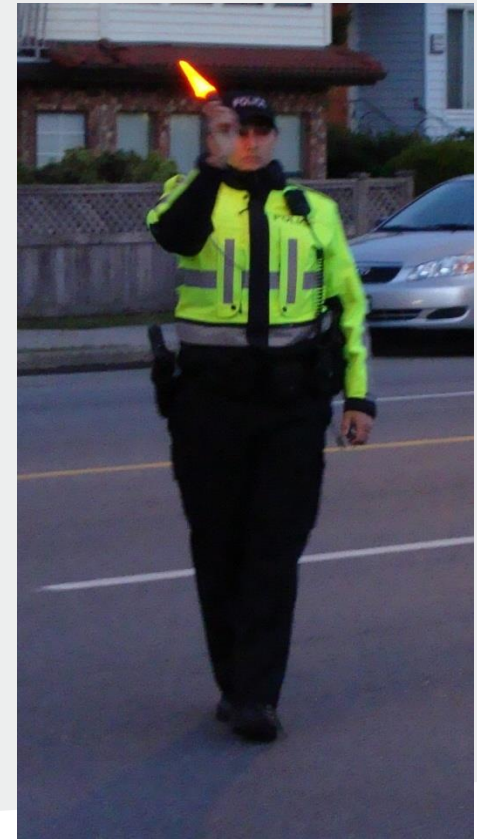
- Variety of procedures/protocols
- Standardized Field Sobriety Test (SFST)
  - Horizontal Gaze Nystagmus (HGN)
  - Walk and Turn (WAT)
  - One Leg Stand (OLS)
- Drug Evaluation and Classification Program (DECP)
  - 12 step protocol involves interview, clinical signs, psychomotor tests
  - Systematic and standardized assessment





# Police Training

- ❑ Most can recognize alcohol intoxication/impairment
- ❑ Detecting drug use can be challenging
- ❑ Training in Field Sobriety Testing is common
- ❑ 8,000 certified Drug Recognition Experts
  - ❑ 96 hours in total
- ❑ Enhanced Field test training – include notable signs and symptoms of drug use
- ❑ ARIDE
- ❑ Enhancements





# Public Education and Awareness

- ***“Weed doesn’t affect my driving”***
- ***“I drive better after smoking”***
- ***“Helps me concentrate”***
- ***“It’s not harmful”***
- ***“It’s natural. It’s not a real drug”***
- ***“It’s not as bad as alcohol”***
- ***“Cops can’t do anything anyway”***





# Knowledge Mobilization Tools and Resources

- **Video of live panel to mobilize knowledge about the effects of cannabis use during adolescence**
- **Online learning module**
- **Toolkit for hosting learning events related to cannabis and youth**
- **Drug-impaired driving toolkit for educators**

**Parents: Help your teen understand what's fact and fiction about marijuana**

**The following facts might be surprising**

- Youth begin using marijuana around 15–16 years old
- Up to 10% of Grade 12 students reported using marijuana every day or almost every day

<b>TEENS SAY, "IT'S JUST WEED"</b>	<b>BUT THE EVIDENCE SAYS</b>
Weed is natural and so it's harmless	Early and regular marijuana use can affect the developing teen brain and is related to mental health problems
Everyone is using weed	About 75% of youth aged 15–24 reported not using marijuana in 2013
Weed helps you focus	Regular marijuana use impairs thinking, attention and memory
Weed makes you a better driver; it's safer than driving after using alcohol	Marijuana use can impair driving and is associated with an increased risk of collisions
Weed isn't addictive and does not "consume" users	1 in 6 adolescents who use marijuana will develop a cannabis use disorder

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