



# Americans for Safe Access Monthly Newsletter

*Defending Patients' Access to Medical Marijuana*

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## ASA Helps Kern Supervisors Pass Medical Cannabis Ordinance

The Kern County Board of Supervisors unanimously passed an ordinance allowing medical cannabis dispensing collectives to operate there last month, thanks in large part to the work of local ASA activists who worked closely with local officials in crafting the ordinance. Supervisors had previously considered the measure at their June 13 meeting, but modified it to protect patient privacy after hearing the concerns of patients and advocates from ASA.

"The changes the supervisors made help protect patients by requiring law enforcement to have a warrant or court order to copy or seize patient records," said Amanda Brazel, Los

Angeles County Field Coordinator for ASA. "We are also pleased to see on-site consumption, edibles and inhalation devices will be allowed at dispensing collectives."

ASA patient-advocates were among the more than 35 in attendance at the supervisors' meeting. Among the dozen patients who spoke in favor of the ordinance, many thanked the county's attorney for removing the provision that tracked patients' names and their transactions, though some expressed concern about the Sheriff's role in administering business licenses for the dispensing collectives. Speakers noted that there has been no

crime involving local collectives in over a year, and the county planning director could administer an ordinance with the same requirements as the one passed.

"We appreciate the supervisors' willingness to listen to the needs of their citizens," said Kris Hermes, ASA legal director.

"Patients in Kern County will have better access to the medicine their doctors recommend thanks to this ordinance."

Kern County joins Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, Alameda, Calaveras and Santa Clara counties, as well as 24 California cities, in establishing guidelines and regulations for access to cannabis through dispensing collectives.

### Inside this Issue:

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- **San Diego Creates Crisis for Patients**
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- **Win a Free Trip to the ASA National Conference in Sept.**

## San Diego Patients Face Crisis, Lawsuit Threatens State Access

Patients in San Diego County face a crisis of access after a series of local and federal actions closed all the medical cannabis dispensaries in the area, even as county officials have launched a lawsuit attempting to gut California's medical cannabis laws. Americans for Safe Access is fighting back on all fronts.

In direct support of patients in San Diego, ASA is training public defenders on representing patients and caregivers, organizing court support for the 15 people facing state and federal charges, raising public awareness about the crisis, lobbying local officials to enact regulations and cease cooperation with federal agents, and intervening in the state lawsuit on behalf of patients.

On July 7, exactly one week after Congress rejected a bipartisan attempt to prohibit the

DEA from wasting resources pursuing medical marijuana patients, federal drug agents and local law enforcement officers raided 13 San Diego area dispensaries and arrested 15 people. These raids follow December raids on the same dispensaries, and a week after the July raids, DEA agents visited the remaining dispensaries in the area, seizing all the cannabis they could and threatening the providers with arrest if they did not close their doors to patients.

In response, ASA activists from the San Diego chapter, led by Wendy Christakes and Dion Markgraaff, organized more than 70 supporters to pack the San Diego City Council chambers, calling for regulations to permit the operation of dispensaries and demanding that the city stop the cooperation between local officials and federal agents.

The council president said they would consider the matter when they return from summer break, on September 12. Meanwhile, ASA Executive Director Steph Sherer and other members of ASA's national staff are in San Diego organizing patients, doctors and supporters, and reaching out to local leaders.

"In matters of health, the city has an obligation to strive to meet the needs of patients in its community," said Kris Hermes, ASA legal campaign director. "If the City of San Diego has received complaints about patients and their providers there are many options of dealing with this situation that do not include calling in the DEA. The city should listen to their constituents on both sides of this issue who are urging dispensary regulations."

ASA Chief Counsel Joe Elford will be conducting trainings for local public defenders on how to effectively represent medical cannabis providers and patients. Other ASA activists are working on developing emergency access plans for those patients most in need. When asked by reporters, San Diego Assistant District Attorney Damon Mosler suggested patients turn to the black market to access their medicine.

"Elderly cancer patients whose oncologists recommend cannabis to cope with chemotherapy should not be sent to a back alley to obtain their medicine," said Sherer. "To suggest that is an affront to the moral sensibilities of the com-

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**Take Action! Tell San Diego officials to act now. [www.sandiego.gov](http://www.sandiego.gov)**

# Researchers Report on Promise of Cannabinoids



by Jahan Marcu

The 2006 International Cannabinoid Research Society (ICRS) meeting, held in Tihany, Hungary from June 24 to 28, brought together funding agencies, industry representatives, and the academic

community to exchange new information and ideas about cannabis and cannabinoids. The meeting included 91 research presentations and 135 posters that discussed the role of cannabinoids in neuronal development, nervous-system function, memory and learning, pain, inflammation, food intake, energy balance, anti-cancer effects, drug abuse, and neuro-protection. Despite differing political opinions, attendees – including clinicians, researchers, and even a few self-proclaimed cannabis experts – generally agreed on the therapeutic potential of cannabinoids.

Founded in 1991, the ICRS is a 400-member international scientific association of active researchers in the field of endogenous, plant-derived, and synthetic cannabinoids and related bioactive lipids. Cannabinoids are components of the cannabis plant, including tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and Cannabidiol (CBD). The endogenous Cannabinoids are those cannabinoids synthesized by our bodies, such as Anandamide or 2-arachidonylGlycerol (2-AG). The wide range of effects from cannabinoids is due to their specific interactions with an endocannabinoid regulatory system in the body. The endocannabinoid system includes specific cannabinoids receptors found throughout the human body.

Patricia Reggio from the University of North Carolina (UNC) presented data on a project that was a collaborative effort between California Pacific Medical Center Research Institute (CPMCRI) and UNC. These researchers investigated the effects of mutations on the Cannabinoid type 1 (CB1) receptor. At CPMCRI, researchers recently generated data on the ability of natural cannabinoids to fight brain and breast cancer, as well as halt the progression of Lou Gehrig's Disease or Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) in mice.

Research presented by Moises Garcia-Arencibia from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem indicated that THC and CBD might provide protection against Parkinson's disease. The data indicates that the protective effects against Parkinson's disease are most likely due to the antioxidant properties of cannabinoids and not the activation of the CB1 receptors in the brain.

Dr. Donald Abrams from the University of California San Francisco (UCSF) presented research entitled "Vaporization as a Safe and Efficient Smokeless Cannabis

Delivery System." The results indicated that future studies of medicinal cannabis could consider utilizing vaporization – a method that releases a vapor of cannabinoids by heating plant material to a temperature just below burning – because it delivers relatively equal amounts of medicinal com-

pounds from the plant when compared to the potentially hazardous practice of smoking combusted material.

At the end of the third and fourth days of the conference "Hot and

Controversial Issues" were discussed. This year the topics were: "Are there CB2 receptors in CNS neurons?" and "Pharmacology of Cannabidiol (CBD): Cannabinoid receptors and Beyond." While these scientifically controversial issues may seem inapplicable to the average medicinal cannabis patient, this type of open discussion among cannabinoid researchers will shape the direction of research, the development of medical applications, and our understanding of cannabis and cannabinoids.

For more information and summaries of the research presented at the meeting, see: [www.cannabinoidsociety.org](http://www.cannabinoidsociety.org).



## Americans for Safe Access

[www.SafeAccessNow.org](http://www.SafeAccessNow.org)

1322 Webster Street, Ste. 402  
Oakland, CA 94612

Phone: 510-251-1856

Fax: 510-251-2036

Email: [info@SafeAccessNow.org](mailto:info@SafeAccessNow.org)

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Oakland, CA 94612

## San Diego Crisis of Access (continued from page 1)

munity. The legislature and voters of California, like most Americans, have made clear that patients have a right to safe and legal access."

In addition to working in the community, ASA has engaged recalcitrant county officials in the courts. When county supervisors not only refused to implement the state-mandated medical cannabis ID card system but filed suit against the state, seeking

to thwart California's medical marijuana laws, ASA joined with the ACLU and the Drug Policy Alliance to intervene in the lawsuit on behalf of patients.

"We're confident of winning," said Elford, ASA's counsel. "The attorneys general of California, Oregon, Hawaii and Colorado all agree that state law is what matters for state and local officials, not the federal prohibition."

## National Action Alert: Collect Pledges of Action and Win Free Airfare to ASA's First National Conference!

ASA is pleased to announce that we will be holding our first national conference in September, 2007 in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. This conference will be an opportunity for medical cannabis advocates and allied communities to join together for panel discussions, training sessions, and strategic planning on national and state campaigns. Entering is easy - all you need to do is download ASA's new "Pledge of Action" and sign up your friends, coworkers and neighbors. For every one hundred pledges collected, you will be entered in a raffle to win a round-trip flight to the national ASA conference in DC! If you enter and don't win the raffle, you will be rewarded with a new ASA t-shirt. **For contest rules and to download the pledge, please visit [www.SafeAccessNow.org/ConferenceContest](http://www.SafeAccessNow.org/ConferenceContest) or call Rebecca at (510) 251-1856 x 308.**