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For Immediate Release: November 10th, 2009

# AMA Report Recognizes Medical Benefits of Marijuana, Urges Further Research

### Largest and oldest U.S. physician-based group reverses long-held position on medical marijuana

**Houston, TX --** The American Medical Association (AMA) voted today to reverse its long-held position that marijuana be retained as a Schedule I substance with no medical value. The AMA adopted a report drafted by its Council on Science and Public Health (CSAPH) entitled, "Use of Cannabis for Medicinal Purposes," which affirmed the therapeutic benefits of marijuana and called for further research. The CSAPH report concluded that, "short term controlled trials indicate that smoked cannabis reduces neuropathic pain, improves appetite and caloric intake especially in patients with reduced muscle mass, and may relieve spasticity and pain in patients with multiple sclerosis." Furthermore, the report urges that "the Schedule I status of marijuana be reviewed with the goal of facilitating clinical research and development of cannabinoid-based medicines, and alternate delivery methods."



The change of position by the largest physician-based group in the country was precipitated in part by a resolution adopted in June of 2008 by the Medical Student Section (MSS) of the AMA in support of the reclassification of marijuana's status as a Schedule I substance. In the past year, the AMA has considered three resolutions dealing with medical marijuana, which also helped to influence the report and its recommendations. The AMA vote on the report took place in Houston, Texas during the organization's annual Interim Meeting of the House of Delegates. The last AMA position, adopted 8 years ago, called for maintaining marijuana as a Schedule I substance, with no medical value.

"It's been 72 years since the AMA has officially recognized that marijuana has both already-demonstrated and future-promising medical utility," said Sunil Aggarwal, Ph.D., the medical student who spearheaded the passage of the June 2008 resolution by the MSS and was one of the CSAPH report's designated expert reviewers. "The AMA has written an extensive, well-documented, evidence-based report that they are seeking to publish in a peer-reviewed journal that will help to educate the medical community about the scientific basis of botanical cannabis-based medicines." Aggarwal is also on the Medical & Scientific Advisory Board of Americans for Safe Access (ASA), the largest medical marijuana advocacy organization in the U.S.

The AMA's about face on medical marijuana follows an announcement by the Obama Administration in October discouraging U.S. Attorneys from taking enforcement action