

Student 3: Low Merit

NZQA Intended for teacher use only

The ethical issue I am analysing is legalising the use of cannabis for medical reasons in New Zealand. This is an ethical issue because cannabis is currently illegal, being a Class C drug, but it has been decriminalised or legalised in many places around the world, and has been seen by many people as effective for a number of serious health conditions. Therefore, there are a lot of people who strongly believe it should be made legal for medical reasons. ①

Two main groups who support legalising cannabis for medical use are people who are suffering from illness (eg for pain relief) and parents of children with illnesses (eg seizures) and NORML. Firstly, those suffering from illness or caring for someone suffering from an illness believe that cannabis can be used to effectively manage the pain or the illness. For example, in the case of Zoe Jeffries, the use of cannabis is effectively controlling her seizures and making her more settled (2). Her family, and others like them, believe that it is unfair to deny a person access to a treatment that is known to be effective in certain situations. Another group 'for' the use of cannabis for medical purposes is NORML, who are an organisation who lobby for cannabis reform in NZ (4). NORML believe that the medicinal benefits of its use far outweigh the harms. They say that "more than 60 international health organizations support granting patients immediate legal access to medicinal cannabis under a doctor's supervision." (4). ②

Two main groups who are against legalising cannabis for medical use are [...]

As stated before, cannabis is illegal in NZ. However, it (sativex) can be accessed for medical use in some cases by seeking approval from the Government. This is a difficult process however. I will explain implications of this situation at personal, interpersonal and societal levels.

For individuals directly affected by the issue, this is a frustrating and stressful situation, which results in them feeling out of control. Many people in this situation risk a criminal record, as they feel there is no choice but to obtain medical products illegally (cannabis oil, eg Helen Kelly, who is terminally ill with lung cancer - 10) or buy marijuana from a drug dealer which is risky. Although accessing this has some positive impacts as their pain/symptoms will be relieved, it creates ongoing stress (mental and emotional well-being) as to whether they can continue to access it, worry about being caught breaking the law, and frustration at not being able to make that decision themselves. This situation shows a lack of respect for an individual's right to make their own choice about their body and how they can control their illness or pain. ③

For individuals indirectly affected (family, friends, doctors) [...]

Implications for the well-being of society [...]

Note that a chart was provided by the student to show bibliographic details for the references used in the evaluation.