

Pot, schizophrenia

link

By Jamie Talan Sun Sentinel

A teenage brain on pot looks frighteningly similar to the brains of adolescents with schizophrenia, according to a new study.

While it is too early to prove a connection, scientists at North Shore University Hospital-Long Island Jewish Healthcare System caution that marijuana could be a match igniting an underlying genetic vulnerability to schizophrenia.

Scientists have long debated whether drug abuse triggers schizophrenia, which in males usually appears in late adolescence, or whether the illness itself can lead to drug abuse.

"It is the story of nature versus nurture," said Manzar Ashtari, an associate professor in radiology and psychiatry at Albert Einstein College of Medicine. "If there are people who are vulnerable and smoke marijuana, they may be putting themselves at greater risk for developing severe mental illness."

Robert L. Balster, an endowed professor of pharmacology and toxicology at Virginia Commonwealth University, said while more research is needed, "studies such as this are very important in providing

new leads for possible brain mechanisms that could be involved in drug abuse and its frequent association with mental illness."

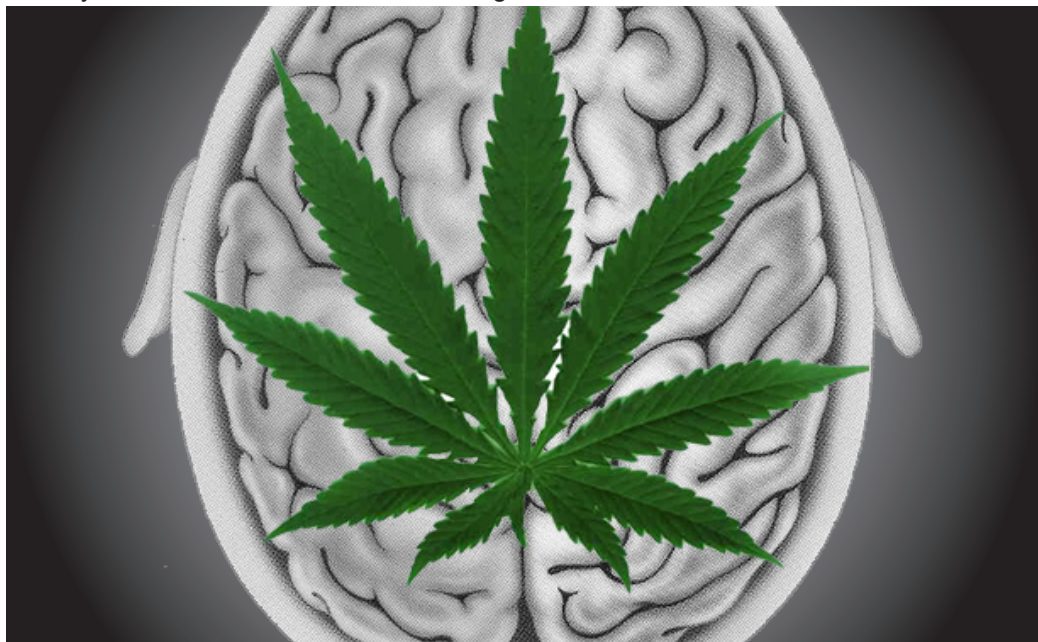
The studies at Zucker Hillside were done only in males because females tend to develop schizophrenia in their mid-20s and beyond. Ashtari suspects the developing brain in late adolescence is at greater risk of environmental damage.

"Whatever insult is happening, it is taking place in brain regions still under construction," said Ashtari, who presented her findings yesterday at the Radiological Society of North America's annual meeting

in Chicago.

The scientists conducted several brain scan studies in teenage marijuana smokers who used the drug daily for at least one year; in adolescent schizophrenia patients who did not smoke marijuana; in schizophrenia patients who also use marijuana regularly in healthy, and nonsmoking controls.

The arcuate nucleus, a bundle of fibers connecting the front of the brain to deeper regions, is underdeveloped in schizophrenia patients and marijuana users.



NCAA Banned Substances

Stimulants
Amphetamines
Caffeine
Cocaine
Ephedrine
MDMA/Ecstasy
Anabolic Steroids
Alcohol
Diuretics
Heroin
Marijuana
Hormones
Analogues

For a complete list of substances
visit www.ncaa.org

One Source Toxicology Offers Steroids Testing

Editor Ty Weaver

One Source Toxicology is offering testing for performance enhancing drugs. Those substances include anabolic steroids, stimulants and other substances of abuse.

The Controlled Substances Act classifies anabolic steroids as any drug or hormonal substance chemically and pharmacologically related to testosterone, other than estrogens, progestins and corticosteroids, which promote muscle growth. The more common steroids are testosterone, nandrolone, methenolone, stanozolol, and methandrostenolone.

Stimulants are often abused as performance enhancing drugs to produce a sense of exhilaration, improve mental and physical performance, increase activity, and produce prolonged wakefulness. The

more common stimulants used include amphetamine, ephedrine, and caffeine.

The long-term effects of steroid abuse are unknown. There are, however, several physical and mental effects from steroid abuse. The physical effects are often high blood pressure, severe acne, premature balding, reduced sexual function, and testicular atrophy. The mental effects occur during and after abuse. Steroids can cause mood swings, hostility, and aggression. Users who become dependent on steroids can suffer from severe depression. The pressures to perform as an athlete can be overwhelming and steroid usage might lead to suicide.

One Source Toxicology is providing testing for the NCAA and their list of banned substances, in addition to, offering junior high and high schools discounted testing prices for performance enhancing substances.