

Few cultural forces in America are as potent as motion pictures. The industry that produces some of our most cherished art and entertainment recognizes its profound influence by adopting policies that promote high ethical standards, such as ensuring that animals are humanely treated on sets, rejecting endorsements by tobacco companies, and establishing parental guides for age-appropriate content.

In this spirit, we write on behalf of the Smart Approaches to Marijuana (SAM) Science Advisory Board, to urge **[STUDIO]** to expand its policy of rejecting tobacco product endorsements to also include cannabis products. We are the leading non-partisan, national organization offering a science-based approach to marijuana policy, co-founded by former Congressman Patrick Kennedy, David Frum, senior editor of *The Atlantic*, and Dr. Kevin Sabet, a three-time White House drug policy advisor most recently aiding Gil Kerlikowske from 2009-2011.

As states across the country legalize recreational marijuana and federal lawmakers consider doing so nationally, provisions regulating the commercialization and marketing of marijuana are sorely lacking. Not surprisingly, major tobacco companies seized on this opportunity and are investing billions of dollars into the marijuana industry. Central to their marketing strategy, just as it was with tobacco, is the promotion of marijuana as a harmless product.

We, the Science Advisory Board, have vast experience in the fields of science, medicine, addiction, and policy, that drives each of us to promote science in discussions on marijuana. Many people, especially youth, lack an understanding of the harms of marijuana, though an ever-growing body of research confirms that the drug is harmful. Highly regarded researchers found that:

- Marijuana is [addictive](#) and appears to be a component cause of a host of mental illnesses, ranging from [anxiety](#) and [depression](#) to [schizophrenia](#) and [psychosis](#), and even [suicidality](#), especially when use is initiated in youth.
- Marijuana use *is* associated with future substance misuse and addiction—individuals using marijuana, for example, are more likely to [misuse prescription opioids](#). Though the majority of those using marijuana won't go on to other drugs, more than 95% of those using heroin and cocaine started with marijuana.
- On its own, marijuana use can severely [impact brain development](#) in young people, leading to lower IQ and to worse mental health, academic, and professional outcomes.
- Encouraged by a for-profit industry, more pregnant women than ever are using marijuana, with potentially [severe consequences](#) for newborns.
- Marijuana can also cause [cardiovascular harm](#).
- In states that legalized marijuana, marijuana-related traffic fatalities are significantly elevated. A study published last month found that widespread legalization could result in nearly [7,000 more traffic deaths](#) annually, due to impaired driving.

Studies also showed that early and frequent marijuana use is linked with major depressive disorders and suicidal behavior and thoughts. A [2005 study](#) by the Washington University School of Medicine found that among twins in which one twin was dependent on marijuana and

the other was not, the dependent twin was 2.9 times as likely to have suicidal thoughts and 2.5 times as likely to attempt suicide.

A [study](#) published in the UK showed that those who use high-potency marijuana daily had four-times the chances of developing psychosis compared with those who have never used marijuana. And [another study](#) found that “Cannabis is involved in approximately 50% of psychosis, schizophrenia and schizophreniform psychosis cases.”

[STUDIO] has an opportunity to take a leadership role on this issue at a critical time by resisting pressure from the marijuana industry to normalize its products through marketing partnerships. We look forward to initiating a dialogue regarding our concerns and how [STUDIO] can help mitigate the commercialization of marijuana.

Sincerely

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Addendum: Recent Peer-Reviewed Research Articles

- Prevalence of Cannabis Withdrawal Symptoms Among People With Regular or Dependent Use of Cannabinoids. (2020). <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2764234?resultClick=1>
- Vaporized Cannabis Extracts Have Reinforcing Properties and Support Conditioned Drug-Seeking Behavior in Rats. (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1523/JNEUROSCI.2416-19.2020>
- Birth and early developmental screening outcomes associated with cannabis exposure during pregnancy. (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41372-019-0576-6>
- Mapping cannabis potency in medical and recreational programs in the United States. (2020). <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0230167>
- New trends in cannabis potency in USA and Europe during the last decade (2008–2017). (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00406-019-00983-5>
- The contribution of cannabis use to variation in the incidence of psychotic disorder across Europe (EU-GEI): a multicentre case-control study. (2019). [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(19\)30048-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(19)30048-3)
- Association between medical cannabis laws and opioid overdose mortality has reversed over time. (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1903434116>