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Why does the UK Government refuse to help reduce the suffering of many?

We here at Freedom4All feel that many will agree with us when we say that pain and suffering should be reduced in whatever way possible. Why is it then that our Politicians seem un-willing to explore certain means of reducing this suffering?

Our Guest writer has offered to share his story to highlight the impact of this political decision;

Our Politicians seem more than willing to [go to war](#) or even to [discuss assisted suicide](#) to help reduce or prevent un-necessary suffering. Yet certain, less severe, avenues are deemed completely taboo.

Many people around the world live their lives in constant pain, reliant on a plethora of medications in their attempts to keep their lives bearable. Some of these unfortunate people were born with horrific disabilities, others develop conditions such as [MS](#), the final group (including me) suffer daily as the result of a single incident earlier in their lives.

As others have noted, it is very difficult to explain the daily battle that constitute our lives without sounding like you are trying to evoke pity. This is not my aim, simply my (inadequate) attempt to help the reader understand the impact of my life the UK's legislation has.

I'm a guest writer on Freedom4All, and I hope to help foster debate on an issue that is very important to me - Freedom of Choice.

Background

My story begins when I was 17. Like most teenagers, I thought I was (more or less) invincible. I was riding my motorcycle to work, and wanted to try and see my Girlfriend on the way. So despite a speed limit of 30 MPH I was riding at nearly double that.

As I approached a roundabout, in my hurry to reach my Girlfriend before the bus did, I failed to reduce my speed as much as I should. On any other roundabout of that size, entering at 50MPH would have constituted little risk (assuming there was no other traffic). Unfortunately, this particular roundabout was on a main bus route, so it was less than surprising when my motorcycle lost grip of the road as the result of a diesel slick.

The bike turned sideways before it had cleared the slick and as the wheels once again gained traction the bike attempted a [barrel-roll](#), taking me with it. I landed just before the bike, and slid along the road until my head hit the kerb.

The injuries I sustained, at the time, seemed less than severe. My right knee was very painful, my palms were grazed (despite being protected by a good pair of leather gloves) and my head hurt. A kind onlooker gave me a lift home in his car, as I was clearly unable to proceed to work.

That night, my father drove me into the hospital where I complained that I could hardly move my right leg. The hospital questioned me about my accident and proceeded to check for signs of concussion. My leg was not examined and I was simply told to rest it for at least a fortnight.

I'll pause my story here to defend the hospital;

A head injury is potentially the most serious and likely damage caused by a motorcycle-involved RTA, and any bruising or swelling of the limbs is to be expected and would normally subside after a period of rest.

Unfortunately, my right knee has never recovered. Indeed, it's only become worse with time. That night was the last time I was even able to attempt to attend a shift for that job. I was simply physically incapable of completing my duties.

Many of my previous hobbies became too difficult, I lacked the strength to skateboard or to run (even walking is difficult).

Some seven years on (and a few trips and falls), I now walk with a stick. My knee hurts even when I'm not moving, and the NHS has been able to offer very little in the way of effective pain relief. I've tried a variety of drugs, none of which have effectively reduced the pain. The most effective drug I've been prescribed is an opiate, but I've become physically dependant (addicted) on it and so have had to begin the (incredibly unpleasant) process of weaning off it.

One of the side-effects experienced by users of this drug is [insomnia](#). It disturbs your sleep, in varying degrees, from the first moment you take it until the point

that your body has finally got used to not having it any more.

Many insomniacs will agree that the **impact on your life is immeasurable**, you slowly begin to go mad through lack of sleep. Your brain is too tired to function, and simple actions (like climbing the stairs to the toilet) seem like indefeatable obstacles.

The NHS has provided me with various drugs to combat the insomnia, but none of them have worked. My (desk-job) work has suffered, my family have suffered and I've suffered, all through a fairly simple side-effect of my analgesia.

The Taboo Treatment

So driven half mad by pain and lack of sleep, I decided to take things in to my own hands.

Just like many others, I'd smoked Cannabis as a teenager but drifted away from that scene as I 'matured' - In the UK, Cannabis is not even available for medical use. It's a Class B drug, and so possession is sufficient to lead to a prison sentence. So here I was, unable to think clearly, wondering whether the potential benefits were worth the risk.

Regardless of whether or not it worked, if I was caught in possession of the weed, my livelihood, family and even my liberty would be put at serious risk. After much consideration I obtained a very small amount. I hadn't smoked it in years, and was very aware that it could react with the various medications I was on. So, I rolled a very small spliff and discreetly smoked it.

Within minutes my head was absolutely spinning, so I crawled up the stairs and into bed. Almost as soon as my head touched the pillow, I was asleep. **For the first time in years, I was asleep almost as soon as I was in bed!**

The next morning I woke up feeling more refreshed than I had in quite some time, it's true that I was still tired but little steps lead to the same place as huge bounds!

As I got out of bed, I realised something: I hadn't taken any of my analgesia yet, but my leg seemed pain free. Admittedly the joint was still largely immobile, but I was pain free despite my head being completely clear.

Consequences

In some ways, I wish my trial hadn't worked. What a position to be in, knowing that there was a treatment that would allow my life to get back to normal(ish), but being caught with that very treatment was enough to turn my life upside down. Could I bring myself to risk sacrificing my job and my liberty for a pain free life? My family had stuck beside me throughout, could I allow them to be opened to the spotlight if I was caught using Cannabis?

My mind went round in circles, until recently, when I decided that my pain was too

much - my misery was affecting those around me, those I care about. I had a single choice to make, the pain had to stop - either I fought it or ended it another way. As painful and miserable as my life was, suicide was not an option. I obtained some more Cannabis and haven't looked back. I get to live the normal life I'd always imagined I would have one day. The government would denounce me as a criminal, and the media would use me as evidence that Britain has been overrun with 'Druggies', but my family and I would get to go back to normal.

Hypocrisy

The one thing that really annoys me about the Government's stance is the intense hypocrisy of it all. They tell us that 'Drugs are bad' yet it's OK for me to take 6 ineffective tablets before I go to sleep (and more during the day), but resolving the problem with 1 spliff a day is wrong?

The medicinal qualities of Cannabis have been recognised by many, from [studies](#) to stories [like mine](#). Some Governments allow Cannabis to be used medicinally (a number of states in the US for example), yet the UK Government is unwilling to even entertain the idea.

Prohibition doesn't work

Groups such as the '[Legalise Cannabis Alliance](#)' argue that prohibition doesn't work. I'm inclined to agree with them: the UK still has an abundance of cannabis smokers, the Government spends vast amounts on trying to enforce the Misuse of Drugs Act, and the only people making any money from the current situation are the 'criminal' dealers supplying their customers.

I'd go even further than *the LCA* in that I believe the current situation is actually responsible for the many issues surrounding Cannabis. For example, I recently had a 'dealer' scam me out of £80. I have absolutely no protection against this, I can't go to the Police and I'm not willing to add assault to my 'crimes'. Clearly I was far too trusting, but **if Cannabis was legal and controlled, this would not have occurred.**

The current suppliers are willing to 'cut' their product with unknown chemicals in order to maximise profit, smokers of hashish **are often smoking boot polish** as well as the expected Cannabis Resin. Inhaling burning boot polish clearly has greater health implications than the expected 'product'. **If the drug were legal and controlled, this would not be an issue.**

Supporters of Prohibition often argue that legalisation would see a huge increase in consumption. This may be true in the short term, but it would also remove the mystery and 'coolness' so perhaps use would go down. Even if usage did go up, what would you prefer your kids did - smoke cannabis & unknown substance bought from a criminal gang or smoke pure cannabis in a controlled environment? In either case, the number of cannabis smokers is statistically unlikely to rise dramatically in the long term.

Unlike the *LCA*, I'm not arguing that Cannabis should be legalised across the board, but why is our Taxpayer funded Health Service not allowed to dispense (or even recommend) this drug even if it might help?

Why do I have to break the law?

Why is it that our democratically elected Government feels that I have to break the law to live a normal life? They'll discuss taboo subjects such as Euthanasia, they'll quite happily worsen the drug situation in Britain by [banning a substance before scientific evidence has even been fully collected](#) (in this case the 'related deaths' were eventually ruled unrelated), yet they are not even willing to entertain the idea that Cannabis use *could* be a very effective form of analgesia.

I'm not suggesting that the Government should legalise Cannabis across the board, or even that they should license it for medical use tomorrow. All I'm asking is that they actually conduct a proper scientific study into the possible benefits; why criminalise those who have no other alternative?

Drugs have always been a taboo subject in the UK, but we should not allow political ideals to interfere with scientific fact. This is something the UK Government has never been good at, [Professor Nutt](#) lost his job because he dared to publicly state that the governments legislation (on Cannabis) didn't follow scientific findings.

Conclusion

The current situation, much like the Victorian view on Sex, stems from a political unwilling to talk about anything remotely Taboo. Successive Governments have tried to extend their reach into our lives, but remain unwilling to do the one thing that could help countless other people in my position. It is time the hypocrisy came to an end, the country is in the midst of an economic crisis and yet we continue to waste money enforcing a law which could (possibly) be more successful if repealed.

Take Action

Please [write to your MP today](#) (Even if, [like me](#), you choose to do so anonymously). Tell them that you want freedom of choice. The NHS should be allowed to utilise any reasonable method to help it's patients. Cannabis may be distasteful to some, but others find the [use of Stem Cells](#) very distasteful. Why is it OK to pander to one demographic on one issue, but not on the other?

If you ever find yourself in constant pain (and I **sincerely** hope that you never will) wouldn't you want to be able to use any available method to reduce that pain? I've chosen to fight the pain, and in doing so **have been branded a criminal**, how many would believe this to be fair?

Tags: [Access to Medicine](#), [Cannabis](#), [Criminal](#), [Depression](#), [Disability](#), [Dope](#), [Drugs](#),

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One Response to “Why does the UK Government refuse to help reduce the suffering of many?”

1.  *Freedom* says:
[October 11, 2010 at 9:30 pm](#) ([Edit](#))

We here at Freedom4All would like to thank you for the effort you have put into this piece. We hope that your standard of living continues to improve, and that one day we'll live in a society where you won't need to be anonymous to make admissions such as this.

An interesting point that you neglect to mention (are you aware of this), a drug currently classified as Class A was regularly administered by the NHS just 20 years ago. This painkiller was administered to women in labour and believe it or not was Heroin!

If the NHS could administer Heroin to pregnant women, why are they unable to dispense Cannabis to those who may benefit? Article 25 of the UDHR states that;

- Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

What the Government are doing is denying you this right without any scientific basis.

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