

The Sixth National Clinical Conference on

Cannabis Therapeutics:

A Report on the 2010 Conference

with photos, captions and text
by Mark Mathew Braunstein

Held biannually, this conference about cannabis as medicine was the sixth in ten years, for which both momentum and attendance has steadily increased. Enrollment totaled 320 for 2010, among whom were 28 physicians (MDs), ten registered nurses (RNs) and dozens holding an array of PhDs, notably in psychology and the biological sciences. Among the speakers, two hailed from Canada, two from Brazil and one from Israel. Many of the participants could be heard speaking English with thick accents. Thus, contrary to name, the conference's scope actually was international. Indeed, humans propagate it and medicate with cannabis throughout the world.

All the participants clearly were pleased. The words "great conference" were spoken by many, in their many accents. While members of the audience expressed aloud their satisfaction on many occasions, their real testament was manifested by-near capacity attendance throughout the entire program. Absenteeism could not have been easier, as multiple exit doors surrounded the auditorium all along the rear and two side walls. But throughout the two days, nearly all the seats remained filled, and the audience attentive. Everyone looked lively and aware and awake.

While the cost of the registration might have seemed prohibitive and thereby dissuaded some from attending, that was a false impression, because several key features of the conference went unpublicized. One great plus is that the city of Providence is New England's second largest city, which retains the charm that Boston long ago shed with its burgeoning size. The conference was held just south of Providence in a luxurious five-star hotel within five minutes of the airport, and yet out of the flight path of the jets. And though a scant two minutes off the interstate highway, the hotel's spacious park-like expanse of lawn and trees buffers it from the roar of vehicular traffic. This all may sound like hype in a travel brochure found in the racks of a tourist office, but is nonetheless true.

As a bonus, the cherry trees that line the hotel's long driveway greeted us in their full regalia. Due to an exceptionally wet and warm April, those trees blossomed prematurely, two weeks ahead of schedule, but right on time for us

very botanically-inclined. That floral display was a portent of more good things to come.

At registration, we were handed another unpublicized bonus in the form of the program. Its thick, heavy two-inch binder came laden with printouts of many of the speakers' presentations and texts. We were also provided on both days with bountiful buffet lunches and plentiful snacks and beverages. While the nutritional content of much of the food and all of the beverages fell below my own whole foods vegan standards, it certainly appealed to everyone else, who indulged themselves with abandon. Anyway, the cuisine was chosen by the hotel management and served by the hotel staff, not by the conference staff.

The all-volunteer conference staff kept busy tending to matters more important than the food, namely keeping the events synchronized and the exhibits organized. Clearly, they succeeded at both. If there were any kinks in the schedule, we in the audience never suspected it. Special thanks is owed to the otherwise unacknowledged but energetic and efficient volunteers of the Rhode Island Patient Advocacy Coalition (RIPAC, ripacpatients.org). As for Rhode Island itself, Americans should applaud its most diminutive state as one of only four that recognizes other states' registries of cannabis patients. Not even California does so. Thus visitors from outside Rhode Island remained within the law. The RIPAC t-shirt logo states it well: I am in a state of compassion.

Boundless accolades must be accorded to the two tireless founders and longtime directors of Patients Out of Time (POT, medicalcannabis.com) Al Byrne and Mary Lynn Mathre, RN, are the primary organizers of this and the five biannual conferences that preceded it. They too have worked long and hard as volunteers, and for patients they will never know and never meet. As we all fall ill and we all will die, we all are patients out of time.

The program? Everything else is but window dressing; it was for the view through the window that brought us to assemble there. The program of The Sixth National Clinical Conference on Cannabis Therapeutics addressed the interests among the broad spectrum of those with advanced scientific and medical degrees, and among us





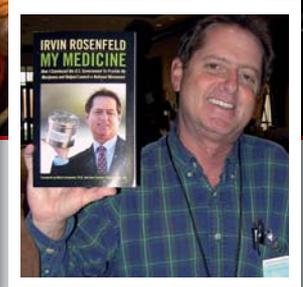
M. Revak & Company (MR & Co).
A bookseller and authors agency based in Virginia.
lexlibris@earthlink.net



Massachusetts Patient Advocacy Alliance (MPAA).
Works for legislation to legalize medicinal marijuana in Massachusetts.
<www.MassCompassion.org



Mark A. Ware, MD, MSc, MRCP,
professor of medicine at McGill University, Montreal, and director of the Canadian Consortium for the Investigation of Cannabinoids (CCIC). His 34 minute presentation at the 2nd Cannabis Therapeutics Conference held in 2002 can be viewed at:
<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-1012664348148988581#>



Irv Rosenfeld, the United States' preeminent poster boy for medicinal marijuana. He is one of only four remaining patients whose cannabis is still provided by the federal government under its now disbanded Investigational New Drug (IND) program. Irv's new book in hand, My Medicine, was published just one day before the conference. Nine minutes of his presentation at the 3rd Cannabis Therapeutics Conference held in 2004 can be viewed at:
<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-7910101114200015716#>



Todd Handel, MD.
Professor at the Alpert Medical School of Brown University, Providence, RI

Lyle Craker, PhD.
Professor of plant sciences at University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Applied to the federal government for a permit to grow marijuana for research, but grew only frustrated with futility. His seven minute summary of his futile efforts can be viewed at:
<http://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=156459603015>

David Bearman, MD.
Longtime crusader for drug law reform, and director of the American Academy of Cannabinoid Medicine. His 23 minute presentation at the 4th Cannabis Therapeutics Conference held in 2006 can be viewed at:
<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-1820696077430281885#>

Raphael Mechoulam, PhD,
professor of medicinal chemistry at Hebrew University, Jerusalem. The keynote speaker of the conference, and the only speaker accorded two sessions, In 1964, Mechoulam discovered and isolated THC as the main active constituent of cannabis. Credited as the father of contemporary cannabis research, he continues to investigate the pharmacology of the entire spectrum of cannabinoids. His 50 minute presentation at the 3rd Cannabis Therapeutics Conference held in 2004 can be viewed at:
<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=4736563701346383014#>

Robert Melamede, PhD,
professor of biology at University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. Professor Melamede, an animated orator, inspired a standing ovation from the audience, who affectionately call him Dr. Bob. He will be featured in an interview in the next issue of Treating Yourself. His 41 minute presentation at the 3rd Cannabis Therapeutics Conference held in 2004 can be viewed at:
<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=4179107660421413341#>



American for Safe Access (ASA).

A national organization of medical professionals, patients, and caregivers which advocates for the legalization of medicinal marijuana at both state and federal levels.
www.AmericansForSafeAccess.org



Mothers against Misuse and Abuse (MAMA).

A health clinic and an advocate for patients in Oregon
www.mamas.org



Berkeley Patients Group (BPG).

A medical cannabis collective and community center serving the San Francisco Bay Area.
www.BerkeleyPatientsGroup.com



Law Enforcement Against Prohibition (LEAP).

Former and current law enforcement officers and judges and prosecutors who publicly oppose America's failed War on some Drugs.
www.leap.cc

patients too. But heralding cannabis in its title was slightly misleading. Actually, its medicinal constituent cannabinoids, as well as our bodies' own endocannabinoids, are what the conference more specifically discussed. Discussion of the plant itself was mostly tangential.

One speaker deserves special mention. The illustrious Dr. Andrew Weil, MD, is a world-renowned authority on the confluence of alternative with allopathic medicines. It is worth noting that in 1987, early in his medical career, he offered 14 pages of testimony to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to advocate rescheduling cannabis out of Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act. Yet cannabis still languishes in that lowly perch for drugs deemed to be of no medical value, despite recent calls from even the very conservative American Medical Association (AMA) to reexamine its scheduling. As though returning to his roots, Dr. Weil addressed us via live video broadcast.

The rest of the conference was not virtual nor video, but real. Viewed online, the program provides scant information. Nevertheless, to gain an inkling of its content, go to: medicalcannabis.com/Clinical-Conferences/2010-upcoming-conference

As it no longer is upcoming, be advised that the aforementioned URL soon will change, after which you can access it through the index for all past conferences: medicalcannabis.com/Clinical-Conferences/clinical-conferences

Among the above listings, be sure to scroll to the bottom of the pages for the 2002 and 2004 conference, where are found links to online videos. Soon the videos for the 2006 and 2008 conferences will be posted online also. Meanwhile, to access many of the videos all in one place, though not categorized by year, here's a third useful URL: youtube.com/cannabistherapeutics

(if you find navigation confusing, click on Uploads, and

then scroll down the right-hand scroll bar)

Beyond its vital information, the conference generated much inspiration and fostered a deep sense of community. Some readers may need reminding what a dark and lonely place it was in the early 1990s for us who espoused the medicinal virtues of cannabis. For instance, in 1991, when I confided to my doctor my use of cannabis to treat the pains and spasms of spinal cord injury, he shut the door else his staff might overhear us, and despite my pleadings, he refused to enter it into my medical report. "Herbal remedy" is all he would risk inscribing. Since then, when medicinal marijuana won the California referendum in 1996, and thereby turned the tide on our nation's long lost War on some Drugs, every new study adds further concrete evidence that proves us right. And this conference provided the perfect gathering place, both of all the evidence, and of all of us adherents. Though the content was scientific, the mood was festive.

No videos can replicate the conference's energy and excitement. You had to be there. Can't wait two years to attend the next conference? Then don't wait. This summer, a similar conference comes to Toronto with some of the same speakers — for instance, Mary Lynn Mathre, RN, and Professor Robert Melamede, PhD (a.k.a. Doctor Bob). That's the Medical Marijuana & Hemp Expo, sponsored by Treating Yourself, the magazine you right now are reading. For further info, go to medicalmarijuana-hempexpo.com

Hope to see you there!

Mark Mathew Braunstein wrote "Getting High & Staying Healthy: How to Reduce the Health Risks of Smoking Marijuana" in Issue 13 of Treating Yourself, and "A Walk on the Wild Side: Paraplegia & Marijuana" in Issue 16 of Treating Yourself. You can download the complete issues from TY's website at treatingyourself.com or his individual articles from Mark Braunstein's website at markbraunstein.org. 🍃



William Johnson, MD, PhD.
Psychiatrist at Zia Behavioral Health, Santa Fe, and member of the Medical Advisory Committee to the New Mexico Cannabis Program.

Rhonda O'Donnell
of Rhode Island, a former nurse now incapacitated by MS, spoke about her use of cannabis to treat muscle spasms.

Ed Glick
a nurse whose RN license was suspended for recommending cannabis to his patients. His 10 minute presentation at the 4th Cannabis Therapeutics Conference held in 2006 can be viewed at: <http://www.youtube.com/cannabistherapeutics#p/u/8/HjuK2sBXCtk>

Jay Rostow
of Virginia spoke about his body's intolerance of opiates, and his use of cannabis to treat muscle spasms.

Jane Metrik, PhD,
professor at the Center for Alcohol and Addiction Studies, Brown University, Providence, RI



Donald Abrams, MD.
Professor of clinical medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, and chief of hematology and oncology at San Francisco General Hospital. He has long heralded the efficacy of cannabinoid relief from pain. His 29 minute presentation at the 3rd Cannabis Therapeutics Conference held in 2004 can be viewed at: <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=8848547564860037103#>

Richard Musty, PhD,
professor of psychology at the University of Vermont, Burlington. His 20 minute presentation at the 4th Cannabis Therapeutics Conference held in 2006 can be viewed at: <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=1801038289574241807#>

Mary Lynn Mathre, RN, MSN, CARN.
President of Patients Out of Time, the primary sponsor of the conference, and editor of the book Cannabis in Medical Practice. Her 22 minute presentation at the 3rd Cannabis Therapeutics Conference held in 2004 can be viewed at: <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=1619499511668140584#>

Sunil Aggarwal, PhD
and soon to be awarded his MD degree. He contributed a central role in persuading the American Medical Association (AMA) to issue a call in November 2009 for the federal government to review its drug schedule status of cannabis, a turnaround for the AMA.

Jesse Stout.
Co-founder and former director of Rhode Island Patient Advocacy Coalition (RIPAC). While director, he had to deflect many questions from patients with the admonition that he was not a lawyer. So to remedy that, he now is attending law school.



Steve DeAngelo.
Director of Harborside Health Center, a dispensary in Oakland, CA, which the New York Times called "a model." A ten minute tour of Harborside, narrated primarily by Steve, can be viewed at: <http://vimeo.com/8585105>

John McPartland, MS, DO.
Professor of medicine at the University of Vermont, Middlebury.

Bryan Krumm, RN, CNP.
Founder of New Mexicans for Compassionate Use, Albuquerque, NM

Jose Crippa, MD, PhD.
Professor of neurosciences, Universidade de Sao Paulo, Brazil

Ed Byrne.
The conference Master of Ceremonies, and co-founder of Patients Out of Time, the primary sponsor of the conference. His 17 minute presentation at the 3rd Cannabis Therapeutics Conference held in 2004 can be viewed at: <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=4758802267905443132#>