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The Great **Drug** Debate; Reagan Aide Takes Issue With Newsweek Story

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While gay rights activists responded with outrage yesterday to a story in this week's Newsweek headlined "Reagan Aide: Pot Can Make You Gay," the White House **drug** adviser who was quoted denied he believes any such thing.

"I have never said marijuana will make you homosexual," Carlton E. Turner said yesterday. "I don't know why someone made a quantum jump on that."

After hearing of Turner's denial, Newsweek reporter Margaret Garrard Warner, who interviewed him, said, "I would agree that the headline is overdrawn, but I think the story is absolutely what he had to say."

In a half-page story in a package of stories on **drugs** in its "Society" section, the magazine said of Turner: "He believes that pot smoking may lead to homosexuality; at the very least, he says, gays who use marijuana are risking damage to their immune system and vulnerability to AIDS.

"Turner offers scant scientific backing for his claims," the report continued. "But he says that when he visits **drug**-treatment centers for patients under 18, he finds that roughly 40 percent of them have also engaged in homosexual activity. 'It seems to be something that follows along from their marijuana use,' says Turner ..."

"My concern is, how is the biological system affected by heavy marijuana use?" he was quoted as saying.

Turner said yesterday that the 40 percent figure came from a director of one **drug** treatment program speaking about the teen-agers who passed through his program's doors.

"That's the point I made -- that we [should] accept this fact and help the kids and the parents deal with it," Turner said of the interview. "When you talk to young people who use **drugs**, you find their inhibitions against everything are gone. This is one of the things that goes along with it. That was the context under which it was discussed."

Reporter Warner said she remembered "pressing" Turner on the question of homosexuality stemming from **drug** abuse, asking him, "Weren't these men maybe gay first?" He said, "Oh no, the **drug** came first," she said.

"I talked to him on the phone -- I took very careful notes," Warner said. "When he talked about treatment centers, he used it in the plural ..."

Newsweek Executive Editor Stephen Smith said the magazine staff "double-checked our sources of information to make sure we were not misconstruing anything Mr. Turner said."

Turner, who objected in particular to the story's headline, said he was surprised when he opened the magazine and saw the piece. "I'm not angry at Newsweek," he added. "It happens and it happens."

Meanwhile, the response to the story ranged from fiery to calmly dismissive.

"It's the kind of thing you'd expect to see in the National Enquirer next to 'Woman Has 5-Pound Frog Baby,'" said Jim Ringer, director of patient services at Whitman-Walker Clinic. "I bet he still believes masturbation causes blindness. I just can't believe somebody would say that with a **straight** face."

"Turner's comment reveals deep ignorance, prejudice and stupidity," said Urvashi Vaid, a spokeswoman for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. "The Kinsey Institute, in its widely attributed and well-respected study on human sexuality, said at least 10 percent of the population is exclusively homosexual, another 30 percent have homosexual experiences during their lifetime ... There is a body of social science research which shows that peoples' sexuality is formed quite, quite early in their lives."

Suzanne Hardman, director of the Northern Virginia teen-age **drug** treatment center **Straight**, said she has does not share Turner's vision of a connection between **drugs** and homosexuality either.

"Certainly, in young people we treat we see evidence of a sort of breakdown of inhibitions around life style," she said. "That takes place outside of sexual promiscuity, of course -- we see kids who don't have the discipline to stay in school either. I don't really see there is a special connection between **drugs** and sexual identity, although certain young people who use **drugs** and are promiscuous may have some confusion about that later, but I don't see any other connections."

Alcohol, **Drug** Abuse and Mental Health Association Administrator Donald Ian **Macdonald** said, "One of the things I think Carlton is saying is that one of the things about marijuana and alcohol is that they do change sexual behavior in kids ... The question of homosexual behavior is interesting because indeed in treatment situations homosexual activity is a problem. Young people at that age, trying to establish sexual identities, they can become confused."

"As kids become involved in progressive **drug** use, thrill-seeking and experimentation is advanced. With homosexuality -- to say it's a casual thing would be very difficult to do."

The question of whether marijuana is a factor in the progression of AIDS is under study. Scientists said yesterday that while there is evidence that marijuana affects the immune system, no evidence exists to suggest that the **drug** either contributes to AIDS infection or affects the progress of the disease.

"It may play some subtle role," said Dr. Peter Drotman, a medical epidemiologist affiliated with the AIDS task force at Atlanta's Centers for Disease Control, "something along the lines of someone who has their judgment impaired might engage in some unsafe sexual acts that might expose them to the virus, that they might not engage in otherwise, but there's no statistically significant difference in patterns of users or nonusers."

"There are many substances which have certain types of immune effects," said Dr. Stanley Weiss of the National Cancer Institute, "but how that translates into the global picture can be very complex."

Several studies of the relation between **drug** use and the disease are still under way, but initial findings about marijuana show nothing new.

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