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Expert discusses drugs at U of Montana

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LSD and marijuana can cause visual changes which in turn may affect how the world is seen, Dr. Theodore X. Barber, a researchist on "psychoactive" drugs, said Tuesday (Nov. 18) at the University of Montana.

His public lecture on LSD, marijuana and related drugs was presented in the Liberal Arts Building under the sponsorship of the UM psychology department.

The drugs may affect pupil and lens functioning, interocular pressure and spontaneous potential among other visual processes, he said.

Other effects may include changes in the nervous system in body perception or image, in time perception, and in auditory, gustative and olfactory processes, he said.

"The more interesting effects are psychedelic," Dr. Barber said. He added that 30 percent of users experience reactions from euphoria, through ecstasy to reality. Others, he said, sometimes experience anxiety or panic and psychotic reactions, which often are called "bad trips."

"Marijuana and LSD effects vary from individual to individual and within the individual," Dr. Barber said. Other variables he cited included the amount of dosage and how and with whom a drug is taken.

"Tests have shown that LSD damages the embryo in the pregnant animal," he said, but he added that "chromosome damage may not occur as reported some years back."

He said common criticisms of marijuana are that it may lead to "hard narcotics, violence, respiratory ailments, decreased motivation and proneness to automobile accidents."
Dr. Barber continued, "The main issue should not be whether or not marijuana should become legalized. Persons who want to will manage to get the drug anyway."

Dr. Barber said that in 10 years marijuana may become legalized. "Now we should consider how it could be sold, handled and integrated in society."

"Once you legalize it, should you prevent it from being sold in grocery stores and from being consumed by babies?" he asked.

Today marijuana has a reputation similar to that of alcohol in the 1920's, he said. But he added, "The great majority of persons under 25 consider marijuana much the same harmless/as alcohol is considered by persons over 25."

Dr. Barber is director of psychological research at the Medfield Foundation, Medfield, Mass. He also holds research positions with the Boston University School of Medicine and with the Worchester Foundation of Experimental Biology.