

Marijuana, Mice and Mothers

Wednesday, 27 September 2006

Last Updated Thursday, 28 September 2006

Does continuously pumping THC into newly pregnant mice and discovering that their embryos don't implant correctly mean that pregnant women who use marijuana will have failed pregnancies? Or worse, have tubal or ectopic pregnancies and be rendered infertile? News reports regarding a Vanderbilt study that infused those mice would have us believe that and much more.

In simple terms the study found that a continuous delivery of THC (one cannabinoid out of 60 in the marijuana plant), disrupted the natural chemical process involved with embryo development and womb implantation in pregnant mice.

However, at least 75 news articles, generated by Health Day news service, felt compelled to go even further than the study's findings.

"Other research, also in animals, has suggested that pregnant women who smoke pot can pass on memory problems to their offspring. And pot use in women during pregnancy has been linked to low birth weight and to symptoms in the baby, such as excessive crying and shaking, according to the March of Dimes," they said.

Let's put some perspective on this as it sounds like a new version to an old story. Lynn Zimmer, PhD, and John P. Morgan, MD, authors of Marijuana Myths, Marijuana Facts, wrote in a 2004 Mothering article that, "THC has been shown to produce spontaneous abortion, low birth weight, and physical deformities-but only with extremely large doses, only in some species of rodents, and only when THC is given at specific times during pregnancy. Because the effects of drugs on fetal development differ substantially across species, these studies have little or no relevance to humans." (Emphasis added)