



Treating
CANCER

Cancer is one of humanity's most devastating diseases, and we're only just beginning to understand CBD's potential to fight it.

In July 2018, the journal *Oncogene* published a study with the cure-for-insomnia title “GPR55 signaling promotes proliferation of pancreatic cancer cells and tumor growth in mice, and its inhibition increases effects of gemcitabine.” While it may have been lacking in linguistic economy, it contains an important conclusion for the future of cancer studies. “Importantly, KPC mice treated with a combination of the GPR55 antagonist cannabidiol (CBD) and gemcitabine (GEM, one of the most used drugs to treat PDAC), survived nearly three times longer [than the control group].” With the barriers to federal testing of CBD slowly beginning to come down, this single sentence in a single study might well be seen in retrospect as a benchmark moment for medical cannabinoids in the U.S. As David DiSalvo wrote of the study in *Forbes*: “The more we learn about the potential of these compounds, the more it seems clear that decades of research being blocked by federal law deprived us of medical advances that are only now starting to surface.”

One person who has felt this way since long before it was cool is the actor and filmmaker (and *Masked Singer*) Tommy Chong, who spoke to *Newsweek* about his years in the spotlight as a cannabis user and advocate. “I’ve made a point to speak out in the proper forums. They love me on Fox News, for some reason. In that respect, I am a spokesman [for cannabis]. I’ve been on panels and they’ve said, ‘Well marijuana is bad for you blah, blah, blah.’ One time I told a guy to

take off his shirt. I said, ‘Take off your shirt and I’ll take off my shirt. I’ve been smoking pot all my life. A lifetime of smoking pot versus—what do you do, drink? Smoke [cigarettes]? Let’s compare bodies.’ He never took off his shirt.” Chong’s advocacy, however, goes beyond his classic characters from *Up in Smoke* and *That ’70s Show*. When he was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2012, cannabis became much more important to him than it had been.

“Cancer is the greatest humbler in the world. You can think you’re invincible, but when the doctor tells you you’ve got cancer, your whole life changes,” says Chong. “I tried the straight route for about a minute. The doctor gave me this drug that can shrink the prostate but it will also give you Alzheimer’s if you keep taking it. It’ll cure your cancer, but you won’t remember that you ever had it. So I got off that right away and I went to a naturopathic doctor. He said to take hash oil in suppositories. You don’t get high. It just treats the cancer. I haven’t been tested for a while, but I know my body. The last time I got tested I was below the cancer level.” Like many of the ailments featured in this special section, cancer research stands to benefit a great deal from the end of prohibition, which Chong feels is an inevitability precisely because of incredible anecdotal evidence like his own is so overwhelming. “On a world level, [legalization] is an inevitability,” he says. “Anything that cures cancer and MS can’t be illegal. It must be available.”

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