Cannabis remains the most frequently abused illegal drug in the world with a prevalence of 119–224 million in 2010 (WHO, 2012). Cannabis use is not without significant health risks. Cannabis is associated with effects on almost every organ system in the body, ranging from the central nervous system to the cardiovascular, endocrine, respiratory/pulmonary, and immune systems. The most current research also shows that cannabis smoking accelerates liver fibrosis in HCV-infected patients. Cannabis use may also be associated with prostate, testicular, and cervical cancers, and risk of developing head, neck and/or lung cancer. In general, acute effects are better studied than those of chronic use and more studies are needed that focus on disentangling effects of marijuana from those of other drugs and adverse environmental conditions. A number of medications have been tested in the treatment of cannabis-associated complications including: divalproex, bupropion, nefazodone for marijuana withdrawal, and lofexidine, baclofen and mirtazapine for withdrawal and relapse have been tried. These will be discussed. Finally, several mechanisms of funding research in the domestic and international settings at NIDA/NIH will be presented.

References.