



Fort Bend County Podcasts

Podcast Episode 60 – Smoke Signals from the Mind

April 30, 2026

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Gina: Welcome to this week's Benefit Detective Podcast. I'm Gina.

Destanie: And I'm Destanie. And joining us today is Dr. Lu. Welcome, Dr. Lu.

Dr. Lu: Hello. Thanks for having me.

Destanie: The other day, I came across interesting information from the National Institutes of Health. The term "cannabis" refers to all products derived from the cannabis plant, while the term "marijuana" refers to specific parts of the same plant that contains significant amounts of active ingredient THC. So, Dr. Lu, if someone were to dabble in marijuana, are the effects of the brain reversible after stopping use, or is there permanent damage?

Dr. Lu: Yes. Most of the brain effects associated with cannabis use are reversible after stopping, but the degree and speed of recovery depends on age of onset, intensity, duration, and THC potency. The recovery time can vary but can last up to several weeks. The short-term cognitive effects are fully reversible after the THC clears from the user's body. Most of the long-term brain and cognitive changes improve significantly with sustained abstinence. And residual effects are more likely with heavy long-term use starting in adolescence. Though even then, improvement is typical.

Gina: So basically what you're saying is, Dr. Lu, it is reversible if people stop using THC or marijuana.

Dr. Lu: Yes. That is the key. You gotta stop. If you continue using, you will continue to have the effects.

Gina: Dr. Lu, how does this affect those with hereditary bipolar and schizophrenia?

Dr. Lu: If you already have schizophrenia and use the drug, your symptoms may get worse. You may have more psychotic episodes and spend more time in the hospital. Research has also found that if you carry certain types of genes that affect brain chemistry, marijuana can raise the chance you'll have schizophrenia. Cannabis may cause schizophrenia symptoms to start earlier in life too. Typically, men show signs of the disorder in their late teens to early twenties and women in their late twenties to early thirties. Using marijuana may make symptoms show up as much as three years earlier.

Dr. Lu: The age at which you start using marijuana also might make a difference. Earlier use, especially during the teen years, may mean a greater chance of having schizophrenia, perhaps because your brain is still developing during this time. If you have a parent or sibling with schizophrenia, you already have a



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higher chance of getting the disease, and using cannabis can make your odds even worse, taking them from one in ten to one in five.

Dr. Lu: Although the exact nature of the marijuana schizophrenia link is still unclear, doctors know enough to offer some guidelines. They recommend that it's wise for teens to avoid marijuana or at least delay using it until they are adults. If you have schizophrenia, don't use marijuana. If you have a family history of schizophrenia or other psychotic illness, also avoid marijuana. And if you're a caregiver for someone who has schizophrenia and uses marijuana, then encourage them to quit.

Destanie: Thank you, Dr. Lu, for joining us for the month of April discussing the effects of THC.

Dr. Lu: Thank you for having me again.

Gina: And before we close the podcast this week, we have Elexis with a tidbit of information of upcoming events.

Elexis: We are so excited to invite you to our seventh annual spring fun run and walk. This year's theme is, are you ready? Extra sweet Candyland. But don't worry. We're putting a healthy twist on it. So instead of following a trail of sugary sweets, we're following the path to sweet success, one step, one laugh, and one healthy choice at a time. The 5k fun run starts at 8:00 in the morning, followed by the mile and a half walk around 8:10 AM.

Elexis: We will have a rock wall, a bounce house, an obstacle course, and mini putt-putt golf. We will also have the kids' 50-yard dash and the kids' stick horse races, along with multiple vendors, raffle prizes, and, of course, lots of free giveaways. To give back to the community, we also are having a clothing drive. All clothing items will be donated to Richmond Rosenberg Helping Hands. And don't worry, if the clothes or shoes are not wearable, you can still donate them because Richmond Rosenberg Helping Hands does have a recycling program that will be able to put these items to use.

Elexis: This event is all about getting active, having fun, and celebrating wellness in a way that feels exciting and doable. And don't worry, if you are not a walker or a runner, there will be multiple activities for you to still enjoy. So lace up your sneakers, bring your family, and follow the pathway to sweet success. Remember, wellness is really a lifestyle.

Gina: So how does one register?

Elexis: Registration can be found on econnect. If you go to the home page and click on the link, it'll take you straight to the registration website. Or if you search your inbox, an email was sent out from the wellness email titled "Register Today."

Gina: Well, that's a wrap for this week's Detective Podcast. I'm Gina.

Destanie: And I'm Destanie. And stay tuned for our next podcast.

Gina: And remember, the Benefit Detectives are here to help.