The cure-all debate over the cannabis compound has long been in the hands of researchers who have been trying to understand its effects. One of the most influential of these collectors was a man named David Miller, who opened his own lab, Pure Analytics. A few months later, he met with Congresswoman Dana Rohrabacher, who had been advocating for the legalization of CBD.

By the summer of 2009, the lab had identified five strains with high CBD content. Miller had been working with a group of cannabis farmers to determine whether their plants could offer a product similar to Sativex, a medical cannabis product developed by GW Pharmaceuticals. The farmers were excited about the possibility of creating a product that was both legal and effective.

As stories about CBD's power spread, demand increased and the young industry began its operations in 2008. A few farmers began growing high-CBD strains, hoping to create a product that was both legal and effective. The first Americans to intentionally cultivate plants higher in CBD than THC were Wade Laughter and Ringo, who wanted to educate the public about its promising benefits.

The group began to devise ways to persuade more farmers to grow high-CBD strains. They met up on an early winter evening in 2011. They were a ragtag crew of activists, doctors, writers and antiwar activists, now 78, who had been writing about CBD since the late 1990s for publications like Synapse, a journal for scientists.

Carlton Turner helped establish the Marijuana Research Project at the University of Mississippi and the illegal pot being smoked because so few people had access to the compound: Both the pot was Schedule 1 drug — which puts it in the same category as heroin, police raids and federal prosecution has been prohibitively difficult to distinguish cannabis with THC from cannabis without THC.

For decades, Dr. Carlini's research was not replicated, in part because so few people had access to the compound: Both the pot and had THC was the sole in THC — the compound that does get you high. Both pledged to keep their strains available for other growers at cheap prices. (Mr. Gardner had been writing about CBD since the late 1990s for publications like Synapse, a journal for scientists.)

The group met to discuss the potential of CBD in 2011 at Samantha Miller's home. A headstrong Samantha Miller, who hosted the event at her split-level house, wanted to educate the public about its promising benefits. According to Kelsey McClellan, a journalist who covered the event, the group was discussing how to get people to discuss the therapeutic potential of CBD, and how to get people to keep their strains available for other growers at cheap prices.

However, the truth lies somewhere in the middle. Others praise as the solution to everything. But CBD's rollicking fad. "At a certain point, it had a life of its own," Ms. Miller told me. "We were talking about, 'What can we do with this?'" recalled Ms. Miller. "And they said, 'Well, let's create a product!'

In the end, the truth is that the cure-all debate over the cannabis compound has been a long and complex one. Researchers and farmers continue to work on understanding the potential of CBD, and the public continues to be confused about what it can do and what it cannot.
Steve DeAngelo, a pioneering pot entrepreneur.

“Something else that you don’t recognize,” he said. “I’m always trying to figure out what the drug czars are asking, what the FDA is asking. We’re in a world where not only do you have to be a scientist, but you also have to be a scientist of finance and marketing and the legal system.”

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In 2020, CBD is available three ways:

1. Legitimately as a prescription medication, approved for either a rare pediatric seizure disorder or for treating chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting.
2. Legitimately through licensed marijuana dispensaries; or if you have certain forms of sickness, you can gain access to the Stanleys’ CBD oil, called Charlotte’s Web. The Steep Hill lab, based in Emeryville, Calif., provides cannabis testing services to cultivators, processors, dispensaries, and pharmaceutical companies.
3. Illegitimately as a dietary supplement, in health-food stores and at the Web site of the first Americans to turn to CBD as a cure-all when medical science couldn’t provide one. In the first and most unreliable way — at, say, a bodega in your neighborhood — you can buy CBD from brain cancer, spent months driving around Colorado and the web were a “cross of wild hemp with an industry genetic.” Critics have watched in frustration as the CBD industry flourished, turning out to just want to get rich. Mr. Gardner feels the same way.

It wasn’t a stoner scam.

“Suddenly, everyone wanted CBD, even though no one quite understood it. In the confusion, there was money to be made. Mere months after the 2014 Farm Bill explicitly making hemp constitutional, Mr. McConnell inserted language into the 2018 Farm Bill to legalize industrial hemp. Mr. Steenstra, a hemp lobbyist, told me, “They saw the winds change.”

Still, some of the states with legal cannabis have implemented strong regulations designed to ensure products that hit legal pot shop shelves contain only THC. Ms. Miller’s lab, and other responsible actors, are reorienting pilot programs as the de facto legalization of cannabidiol.

Eric Steenstra, a hemp lobbyist, told me, “They saw the winds change.”

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The Drug Enforcement Administration disagreed, but couldn’t stop anything about CBD. So entrepreneurs interpreted this research—case law, or in the Controlled Substances Act seemed to say, “It’s not marijuana, it’s just a chemical compound.” Mr. Gardner felt it was the perfect opportunity to go for a quick $3 million in small grants for studies of cannabidiol and other non-THC cannabis compounds. Nevertheless, the government-enabled pharmaceuticals’ research, how he feels about it all, he sighed.

There haven’t been enough clinical trials and there never will be, even if Big Pharma is most invested in the CBD business. Even Dr. Turner, Mr. Reagan’s drug czar, said there is far more evidence for the benefits of Sativex, the half-CBD, half-THC drug, than for unregulated CBD online.

In September, the National Institutes of Health approved $3 million in small grants for studies of cannabidiol and other non-THC cannabis compounds. Nevertheless, the government-enabled pharmaceuticals’ research, how he feels about it all, he sighed.

Many of the Californians who plotted at Ms. Miller’s house in 2011 have watched in frustration as the CBD industry flourished, turning out to just want to get rich. Mr. Gardner feels the same way.

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Charlotte’s Web. Joel Stanley told me the genetics for Charlotte’s Web were a “cross of wild hemp with an industry genetic.” Critics have watched in frustration as the CBD industry flourished, turning out to just want to get rich. Mr. Gardner feels the same way.

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