

## **Australian Opioid Treatment Program staff perspectives regarding cannabis use by clients on Opioid Agonist Treatment: A Cross-Sectional Survey**

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**Introduction:** Cannabis is the most widely used substance by Australian clients on Opioid Agonist Treatment (OAT) for opioid dependence. Yet, despite the high prevalence of cannabis use and its associations with a range of bio-psycho-social harms, there has been little research into responses to cannabis use in OAT clients. This novel study examined the perspectives of Opioid Treatment Program (OTP) clinical staff for the extent and need for treatment intervention for cannabis use in OAT clients.

**Methods:** Data was collected from an online survey targeting Opioid Agonist Treatment clinical staff in six Local Health Districts public OTP clinics in New South Wales, facilitated through the NSW Drug and Alcohol Clinical Research and Improvement Network (DACRIN).

**Results:** 162 OTP clinical staff participated in the survey (54% response rate), with the median response (44.5%) reporting OAT clients suffer from problematic cannabis use. More than half (50.5%, 52/103) stated only 10% of clients identified cannabis use as a problem. 63.7% (65/102) of staff believed OTP services should do more to address cannabis use. 77.5% (79/102) staff believed that cannabis treatment should be offered as part of OTP services, with 72.5% (74/102) and 66.6% (68/102) agreeing that medicinal cannabis should be an option for some OAT clients to address health condition and cannabis dependency.

**Discussions and Conclusions:** Problematic cannabis use in OAT clients was concerning to clinical staff. Cannabis dependency treatment could be provided through OTP clinics considering medicinal cannabis for addressing OAT clients' health issues and cannabis use.

**Implications for Practice or Policy:** Further research by our team will investigate motivations of use among OAT clients and importantly, the implication of addressing cannabis use in OAT clients. This information will be utilised to co-design a clinical staff-led client centred strategy for addressing cannabis use in OTP clinics.

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