

CANNABIS USE AMONG PEOPLE PRESCRIBED OPIOIDS FOR CHRONIC NON-CANCER PAIN: OBSERVATIONS FROM THE POINT COHORT

Gabrielle Campbell¹, Suzanne Nielsen¹, Nicholas Lintzeris⁸, Raimondo Bruno^{1,6}, Amy Peacock¹, Gary Chan⁹, Briony Larance¹, Milton Cohen^{1,2}, Michael Farrell¹, Wayne D. Hall^{9, 10} and Louisa Degenhardt^{1,3,4,5}

1. National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW, Australia
2. St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney, Australia
3. School of Population and Global Health, University of Melbourne, Australia
4. Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Australia
5. Department of Global Health, School of Public Health, University of Washington, USA
6. School of Medicine, University of Tasmania, Australia
7. Discipline of Addiction Medicine, University of Sydney, Australia
8. The Langton Centre, South East Sydney Local Health District (SESLHD) Drug and Alcohol Services, Australia
9. Centre for Youth Substance Abuse Research, University of Queensland, Australia
10. National Addiction Centre, Kings College, London, England

Background:

We investigated the relationship between pain interference and cannabis use in a large community sample of people who had been prescribed opioids for chronic non-cancer pain. This topic is of increasing interest given that the medicinal use of cannabis for chronic pain is commonly discussed.

Design and Methods:

The POINT study included 1,500 people prescribed pharmaceutical opioids for chronic non-cancer pain. Prospective data from the baseline, one-year, two-year and three-year interviews are presented. Data on the use of cannabis, ICD-10 cannabis use disorder and the use of cannabis for pain were collected. The prospective relationship between cannabis use and pain interference will be examined.

Results: Approximately, one-in-eight participants reported using cannabis in any given year, with one-in-ten reporting past month use; between 10-12% reported using cannabis for pain relief in the past year at each wave. An increasing proportion of the cohort across waves reported that they would use cannabis for pain relief if they had access to it, from 33% at the baseline interview, increasing to 54% at the 3 year follow up.

Discussion and Conclusions:

Cannabis use, for both recreational purposes and pain relief, appears common among people living with chronic non-cancer pain. In a sample of people prescribed opioids for chronic non-cancer pain, with significant physical and mental health problems, it does not appear as though cannabis reduces pain interference.