

Prevalence and correlates of positive parental attitudes towards cannabis use and use intention in Australia during 2016 and 2019.

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Introduction

With recent policy change around medicinal cannabis in Australia, there is concern about the influence of changing norms of cannabis use on adults who are actively parenting.

Method

We used National and Drug Strategy and Household Surveys to estimate the changes in cannabis-related attitudes among Australian parents from 2016-2019 and performed logistic regression analyses to identify the associated correlates.

Results

The estimated proportion of parents who supported legalisation and approved regular cannabis use increased significantly. Parents who would try cannabis if it was legal grew from 5.9% (95%CI: 5.2, 6.7) to 8.1% (95%CI: 7.2, 9.0). Parents who said they would use cannabis more often increased from 1.6 (95% CI: 1.2, 1.9) to 2.9 (95%CI: 2.4, 3.4), an 81% jump in the three-year period.

The strongest associations were observed between very high level of psychological distress and regular smoking and drinking. For example, people with very high level of psychological distress were 2.16 times (95%CI: 1.42, 3.28) and 2.48 times (95%CI: 1.61, 3.83) more likely to approve legalisation and regular cannabis use, respectively. Daily drinking was associated with higher odds of trying cannabis (OR=1.66; CI:1.25-2.20).

Discussions and Conclusions

The proportion of parents would try or use cannabis more often represents a sizeable pool of potential new and frequent users. This highlights the need for education and intervention strategies for parents who use cannabis and care for young children. The associations between mental health and substance use suggest more research is needed to understand the impact of legalisation on vulnerable groups.

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