

Cannabis Use Reported by Patients in an Academic Medical Practice

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Abstract : Statement of the Problem: Despite the growing popularity of cannabis in the general population, there are several unknowns regarding its use, specific reasons for use, patient's choice of products, health benefits, and adverse effects. The aim of our study was to evaluate patient-reported information related to cannabis use that was recorded in the electronic medical records. Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: We manually reviewed the electronic medical records of cannabis users who were part of a large pharmacogenomic study. Data abstracted included demographics, level of education, concurrent alcohol and tobacco use, type of cannabis utilized, formulation, indication, symptomatic improvement, or adverse effects reported. Following this, we did a descriptive statistical analysis. Findings: Our sample of 164 cannabis users were predominantly female (73.2%); 66% of users reported using cannabis for medical indications. Of the 109 patients who recorded information pertaining to alcohol/tobacco use, two-thirds of cannabis users reported concurrent use of alcohol, and about half of them were former or current tobacco users. The mean age of cannabis use was 66 years. Regarding the type of cannabis, 34.1% reported using marijuana, 32.3% reported CBD use, 1.8% reported using THC, and 1.2% reported using Marinol. Oral formulations (capsules, oils, suspensions, brownies, cakes, and tea) were the most common route (44 %). Indications for use included chronic pain (n=76), anxiety (n=9), counteracting side effects of chemotherapy (n=4), and palliative reasons (n=2). Fifty-eight of the 76 users endorsed improvement in chronic pain (80%), 5 users reported improvement in anxiety, and 2 reported improvement in side effects of chemotherapy. Conclusion & Significance: The majority of our cannabis users were Caucasian females, and there was a high likelihood of coinciding use of alcohol/tobacco in patients using cannabis. Most of our patients used the oral formulation for chronic pain. Importantly, a considerable number of patients reported improvements in chronic pain, anxiety, and side effects of chemotherapy.

Keywords : cannabis use, adverse effects, medical practice, indications

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