

Rising Cannabis Use Among Adults with Diabetes

Study Reveals Significant Increase in Cannabis Use Among Adults with Diabetes

Researchers at the University of California San Diego School of Medicine have discovered a notable increase in cannabis use among adults with diabetes in the United States. This finding has raised concerns about the potential impact on their health outcomes. The study analyzed data from the 2021-2022 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), highlighting a growing trend and its implications.

Rising Cannabis Use Among Diabetic Adults

The study estimates that 9.0 percent of adults with diabetes used cannabis in the past month. This marks a significant increase in prevalence, from 7.7 percent to 10.3 percent, representing a 33.7 percent rise between 2021 and 2022. This increase prompts concerns about the potential adverse health effects on individuals with diabetes.

Health Concerns and Cardiovascular Risks

The researchers emphasize the health risks associated with cannabis use among people with diabetes. Previous studies have linked cannabis use to adverse cardiovascular outcomes, a particular concern for those already vulnerable due to diabetes. The increased prevalence of cannabis use could exacerbate these risks, highlighting the need for cautious consideration and further research.

Perceived Therapeutic Benefits and Increased Access

The study suggests that the rising use of cannabis among adults with diabetes may be driven by its perceived therapeutic benefits, such as insomnia relief and pain management for neuropathy. The legalization of cannabis in multiple states has also increased access to cannabis products, leading many individuals with chronic illnesses to use cannabis as an alternative treatment for their symptoms.

Polysubstance Use Among Diabetic Individuals

The study found that individuals with diabetes who engage in other substance use, such as tobacco use, binge drinking, and misuse of opioids and stimulants, are more likely to have used cannabis. This polysubstance use could further exacerbate the health risks associated with diabetes, emphasizing the importance of addressing multiple substance use issues among this population.

Recommendations for Health Care Providers

The findings underscore the need for healthcare providers to screen for cannabis use among their patients with diabetes. Providers should educate patients about the potential risks and benefits of cannabis use and offer guidance on safe practices. This proactive approach can help mitigate health risks and improve patient

outcomes.

Call for Further Research

The researchers call for additional studies to understand the effects of cannabis on diabetes outcomes. Developing evidence-based guidelines for cannabis use among individuals with diabetes is crucial to ensuring safe and effective treatment options. Further research will help clarify the complex relationship between cannabis use and diabetes management.

Study Details and Leadership

The study, published on July 22, 2024, in *Diabetes Care*, was led by Benjamin Han, M.D., M.P.H., associate professor and associate chief of research in the Division of Geriatrics, Gerontology, and Palliative Care. Co-leaders include Jeremy Pettus, M.D., associate professor in the Division of Endocrinology & Metabolism, and Alison Moore, M.D., M.P.H., professor and chief of the Division of Geriatrics, Gerontology, and Palliative Care. Dr. Moore is also the director of the Sam and Rose Stein Institute for Research on Aging and the Center for Healthy Aging.

The significant increase in cannabis use among adults with diabetes raises critical health concerns that need to be addressed. Healthcare providers must be vigilant in screening for cannabis use and educating their patients on the potential risks and benefits. As cannabis becomes more accessible, ongoing research and evidence-based guidelines will be essential in ensuring the health and well-being of individuals with diabetes.

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