

Medscape

Legalized Cannabis and the Brain: NIDA Sounds the Alarm

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The full study was published in the March 2016 issue of *JAMA Psychiatry*.

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Researchers at the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) are sounding the alarm over a possible increase in unknown cognitive and behavioral harms that widespread cannabis use may unmask.

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“Emerging evidence suggests that adolescents may be particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of cannabis use,” the investigators write.

Several studies, for example, have shown that individuals who use cannabis at an earlier age have greater neuropsychological impairment and that persistent use of cannabis from adolescence was associated with neuropsychological decline from the age of 13 to 38 years. This was not found to be the case when cannabis was first used in adulthood.

There is also “fairly clear evidence” of structural alterations in a number of areas in the brain associated with exposure to cannabis, although some evidence suggests that concomitant drinking may explain some of the structural alterations attributed solely to cannabis use.

MRI studies have also pointed to changes in neural activity among cannabis users, including inefficient processing during a working memory task.

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“There is both preclinical and clinical evidence supporting the view that cannabis use is associated with an ‘amotivational’ state,” said Dr Volkow. The term “cannabis amotivational syndrome” is distinguished by apathy and difficulty with concentration.

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There is also a lingering controversy over whether cannabis can trigger psychiatric disorders, notably, psychotic disorders and schizophrenia.

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“From these studies, use of cannabis is estimated to increase the risk of schizophrenia by approximately 2-fold, accounting for 8% to 14% of cases, with frequent use or use of cannabis with high THC potency increasing the risk of schizophrenia 6-fold.”

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“Science has shown us that marijuana is not a benign drug. The morbidity and mortality from legal drugs is much greater than that for illegal drugs, not because the drugs are more dangerous but because their legal status makes them more accessible and a larger percentage of the population is exposed to them on a regular basis,” she said.

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Crude Pot Is Not Medicine

Be sober-minded; be watchful. 1 Peter 5:8



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