Impact of COVID-19 on Cannabis Use and Practices among Medical vs. Recreational Users

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Introduction
- Medical cannabis users (MCUs) and recreational users indicate differing frequency, quantity, motives, and characteristics of use (Sznitman, 2017; Sznitman and Room, 2018).
- COVID-19 impacted rates of substance use and mental health (Czeisler et al., 2020).
- This study examined changes in cannabis use patterns among MCUs, recreational users, or both during the pandemic.

Method
- 241 self-identified, cannabis users from MTurk who reported recent use.
- Online survey measured use patterns, motives, attitudes, and behaviors.
- Survey included items related to COVID-19 and health.

Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Data</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>21 – 70 years (M = 35.75, SD = 9.99)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td>77% - Caucasian/European 9% - Black/African 8% - Latinx/Hispanic 6% - Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender Identity</td>
<td>62% - Male 36% - Female 19% - Transgender &lt;1% - Genderqueer</td>
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Results
- Medical, recreational, and those who use both recreationally and medically, differ in overall cannabis use \([F(2,238) = 5.83, p < .00]\) and vaped cannabis use \([F(2,238) = 4.37, p < .00]\) during the pandemic.
- MCUs (M = .41, SD = .70) increased overall cannabis use compared to recreational users (M = -.10, SD = .74) and individuals who used for both (M = .05, SD = .79).
- MCUs (M = .30, SD = .74) increased cannabis vaping compared to strictly recreational users (M = -.14, SD = .73), but not compared to those who used for both reasons.
- Recreational users were most likely to report changing use due to respiratory or lung health concerns compared to medical and both \(X^2 (2, N = 241) = 6.50, p = .039\).

Conclusions
- Frequency of use during the pandemic differed by self-identified user type.
- Medical users of cannabis may be more prone to problematic use during the pandemic.
- Recreational users may be more likely to reduce use due to health-related stressors.
- Understanding client motives for medical vs. recreational cannabis use could be helpful for clinicians.
- Our findings correspond to non-pandemic use patterns, suggesting that medical use is associated with higher quantity/frequency and a greater risk of problematic cannabis use compared to recreational use (Turna et al., 2020).

Recreational users who changed cannabis use patterns were more likely to endorse respiratory or lung health concerns, compared to medical users or both.