California NORML Research Report

STUDIES SHOW MEDICAL CANNABIS REDUCES OPIOID USE

A mounting body of scientific research shows that medical cannabis is being used by chronic pain patients as an effective harm-reduction substitute for opioids and other more dangerous prescription drugs.

Medical Marijuana Laws May Be Associated With A Decline In The Number Of Prescriptions For Medicaid Enrollees (Bradford & Bradford, *Health Affairs*, Apr 2017):

Medicaid prescription drug costs were lower in states with medical marijuana laws in five of nine clinical areas, including pain. Estimated cost savings > $1 billion.

http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/early/2017/04/13/hlthaff.2016.1135


Survey of 1,513 New England dispensary members reported 76.7% reduced use of opiates starting use of medical cannabis


A survey of 2897 medical cannabis patients found 30-34% used opioids and 61% of those used opioids with cannabis, 97% of whom “strongly agreed/agreed” that cannabis reduced their opioid consumption.

http://online.liebertpub.com/doi/pdfplus/10.1089/can.2017.0012


Medical marijuana legalization associated with reductions if 23% in hospitalizations due to opioid dependence and 13% due to overdose.


National overall reductions in Medicare program and enrollee spending in states with medical marijuana laws estimated to be $165.2 million per year in 2013.

http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/35/7/1230.abstract

46% of 2,774 cannabis users reported using it as a substitute for RX drugs, the most common being narcotics/opioids (35.8%).

https://www.dovepress.com/cannabis-as-a-substitute-for-prescription-drugs-ndash-a-cross-sectional-peer-reviewed-article-JPR

Cannabis and intractable chronic pain: an explorative retrospective analysis of Italian cohort of 614 patients (Fanelli et al. *J of Pain Research* May 2017)

“Even with the heterogeneity of the sample size and limited data available… the treatment seems to be effective and safe in the majority of patients”

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5449133/


States permitting medical marijuana dispensaries experience a relative decrease in both opioid addictions and opioid overdose deaths compared to states that do not.

http://www.nber.org/papers/w21345


Conclusion: Medical cannabis laws are associated with significantly lower state-level opioid overdose mortality.


Cannabis Use Is Associated With Decreased Opiate Medication Use in a Retrospective Cross-Sectional Survey of Patients With Chronic Pain (Boehnke, Litinas, Clauw, *J. Pain* Jun 2016.)

Survey of 244 chronic pain patients found medical cannabis use associated with a 64% decrease in opioid use, decreased number and side effects of medications, and an improved quality of life.


Study of 24 medical cannabis patients found notable decrease in use of conventional pharmaceutical agents, with opiate use declining more than 42%


The Effect of Medicinal Cannabis on Pain and Quality of Life Outcomes in Chronic Pain: A Prospective Open-label Study (Haroutounian et al, *Clin J Pain*, Dec 2016)

The treatment of chronic pain with medicinal cannabis in 176 patients resulted in improved pain and functional outcomes, and a significant reduction in opioid use.

Among veterans, opioid prescription requests down in step with rise in medical pot (Vancouver Globe and Mail, Jun 7, 2016)

U. New Mexico study suggests medical marijuana could decrease prescription opiate abuse. (Study by UNM Prof. Jacob Vigil and Prof. Sara Stith)
18-month study finds 31% reduction in opioid use among chronic pain patients using medical cannabis. [http://www.dailylobo.com/article/2017/03/medical-cannabis-research.]

Other reports about the potential benefits of medical cannabis in addressing the opioid epidemic:
The opioid crisis in America’s workforce
[http://www.castlighthealth.com/typ/the-opioid-crisis/]

Could Pot Help Solve the U.S. Opioid Epidemic?

Cannabidiol: Swinging the Marijuana Pendulum from ‘Weed’ to Medication to Treat the Opioid Epidemic

Substituting cannabis for prescription drugs, alcohol and other substances among medical cannabis patients: The impact of contextual factors

Medical Cannabis in Arizona: Patient Characteristics, Perceptions, and Impressions of MedicalCannabis Legalization

Profiles of medicinal cannabis patients attending compassion centers in Rhode Island

Who are medical marijuana patients? Population characteristics from nine California assessment clinics

Patients Are Ditching Opioid Pills for Weed
[https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2017/02/marijuana-cannabinoids-opioids/515358/]

http://www.canorml.org