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Medical cannabis and mental health: A guided systematic review.

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Abstract

This review considers the potential influences of the use of cannabis for therapeutic purposes (CTP) on areas of interest to mental health professionals, with foci on adult psychopathology and assessment. We identified 31 articles relating to the use of CTP and mental health, and 29 review articles on cannabis use and mental health that did not focus on use for therapeutic purposes. Results reflect the prominence of mental health conditions among the reasons for CTP use, and the relative dearth of high-quality evidence related to CTP in this context, thereby highlighting the need for further research into the harms and benefits of medical cannabis relative to other therapeutic options. Preliminary evidence suggests that CTP may have potential for the treatment of PTSD, and as a substitute for problematic use of other substances. Extrapolation from reviews of non-therapeutic cannabis use suggests that the use of CTP may be problematic among individuals with psychotic disorders. The clinical implications of CTP use among individuals with mood disorders are unclear. With regard to assessment, evidence suggests that CTP use does not increase risk of harm to self or others. Acute cannabis intoxication and recent CTP use may result in reversible deficits with the potential to influence cognitive assessment, particularly on tests of short-term memory.

KEYWORDS: Assessment; Medical cannabis; Psychopathology; Substance use

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