Differences in Quit or Reduction Intentions in Medical and Non-Medical Users of Marijuana

Abstract

As part of a prospective natural history study describing the patterns of marijuana use, 221 participants of varying demographic characteristics and geographic locations were screened either by phone or by online screening form. The main study will measure intentions of participants to stop or reduce their marijuana use on a given day as well as the amount used. As part of screening, 27 (12%) noted they used marijuana for "medical reasons". Further details about this medical use were not obtained; however, many of the participants live in states where marijuana is not approved for medical use. During screening, marijuana users were asked   "How likely are you to stop or reduce your marijuana use in the next month?"They were able to respond on an ordinal scale with the choices of "definitely not", "probably not", "possibly", "probably", or "definitely". After responses were given, we assigned numeric values to the responses such that "definitely not" corresponds to a value of 1 and "definitely" corresponds to a value of 5, creating an interval scale. The mean stop or reduce score for those who stated that they use marijuana for medical reasons was 2.7. The mean stop or reduce score for those stated they do not use marijuana for medical reasons was 1.5. These results indicate a surprising deviation from our expectations; those who use marijuana for medical reasons were more likely to want to stop or reduce their use than those who were not using marijuana for medical reasons.   Perhaps using marijuana for reasons other than its intoxicating effects is associated with less dependence, similar to using opiates for pain vs. for intoxication. To our knowledge this comparison has not been previously reported. Thus, it will be prudent to examine this difference in a larger, more representative sample and to ask questions testing hypotheses for this difference.