

Cannabinoids and Health

Module 8

Lecture 3: Studies on Cannabis Use in Patients

Cannabis for Cancer Symptoms?

- Martell and colleagues conducted a comprehensive assessment of cannabis use by patients with cancer
 - Characterized patient perspectives about cannabis and its use.
- Anonymous surveys were administered
 - Recruited from two community cancer centers in Canada
 - Those two centers provided cancer care to an “entire provincial health care jurisdiction”
- Surveys had a 63% response rate (1,897 participants)

More on Cannabis Use Among Cancer Patients

- A minority (18%) used in the last 6 months
 - More likely to be younger
 - Only 14% had authorization for medical purposes
- Most used dry leaves (81%)
 - Half used edibles/oils (48%)
- Of those, 70% used cannabis to address cancer symptoms (Table II)

TABLE II Reasons for use^a given by 356 respondents reporting cannabis use within the preceding 6 months

Reason	Active users [n (%)]
Any cancer symptom (combined)	250 (70)
Cancer-related pain	165 (46)
Cancer-related nausea	122 (34)
Other cancer symptoms	110 (31)
Any non-cancer reason (combined)	199 (56)
Non-cancer symptoms or illness	76 (21)
Other non-cancer reasons	157 (44)

^a Respondents were allowed to select more than one reason for having used cannabis.

Cannabis for Cancer: Which Patients Use?

- Patients who reported cannabis use were asked about when the “First used”
 - Roughly equal proportions first used cannabis recently (28%-36%) as had a prior history with cannabis (first used 5+ years).
- Current cannabis use was associated with receiving other current systemic therapy (age, sex, education unrelated).

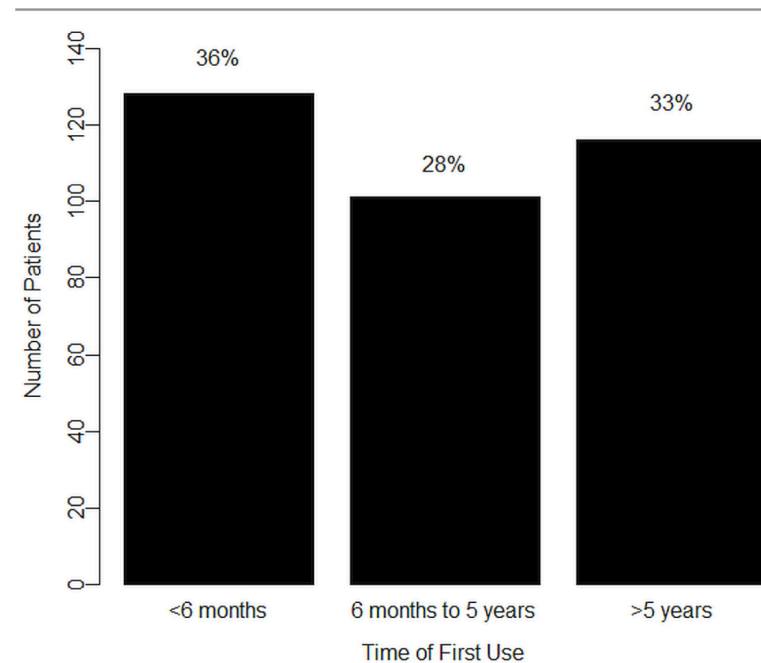


FIGURE 1 Time from first use of cannabis in respondents with any cannabis use in the past six months.

Cannabis for Cancer: Which Patients Use?

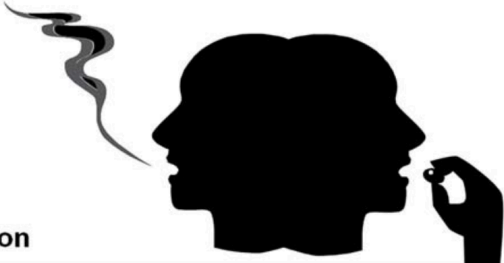
- Patients generally perceived:
 - Cannabis was effective for treating cancer symptoms
 - Cannabis should be used only under the guidance of a doctor
 - Most did not believe that cannabis “helps cure cancer”
- Authors concluded that cannabis use is common in patients with cancer, and used to address cancer-related *symptoms*

TABLE III Opinions about cannabis use from 1987 respondents

Statement	Opinion [n (%)]
Cannabis helps treat cancer symptoms	
Strongly agree or agree	1087 (55)
Unsure or no response	812 (41)
Disagree or strongly disagree	88 (4)
Cannabis should be used only under guidance of a doctor	
Strongly agree or agree	1162 (58)
Unsure or no response	418 (21)
Disagree or strongly disagree	407 (20)
Cannabis helps cure cancer	
Strongly agree or agree	326 (16)
Unsure or no response	945 (48)
Disagree or strongly disagree	716 (36)

Cannabis for Cancer: How Do Patients Use?

- A cross-sectional, anonymous survey of adult cancer patients
 - Performed at a National Cancer Institute–designated cancer center in Washington.
 - Random urine samples for THC provided survey validation.

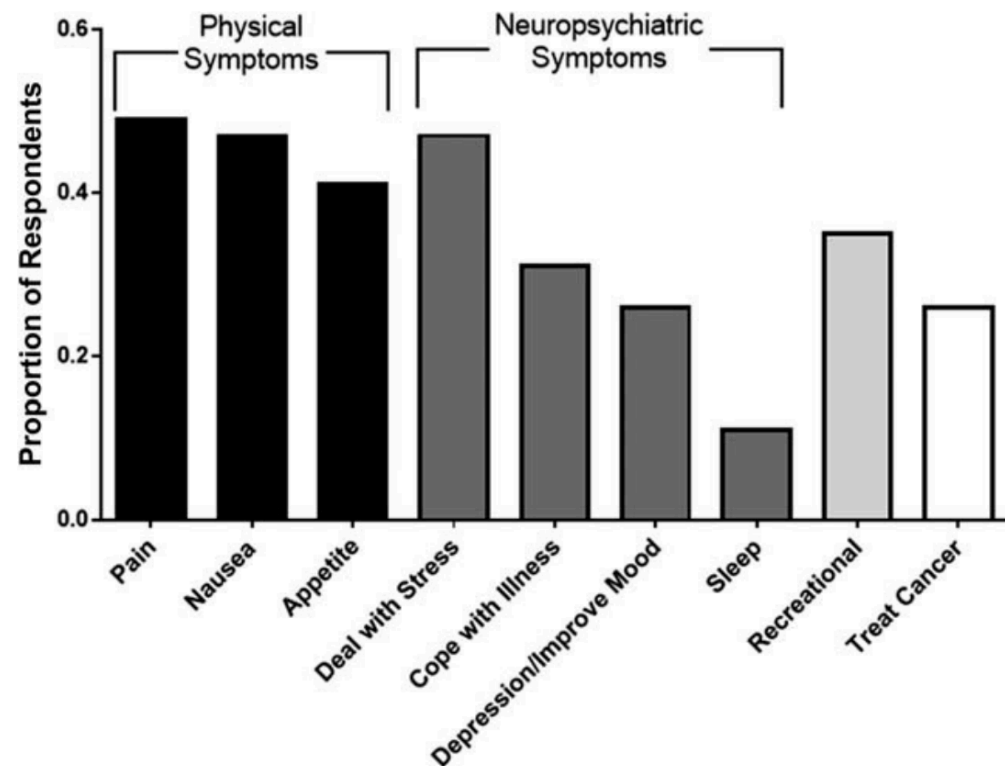


Methods of Inhalation				Methods of Ingestion	
Method	n(%)	Methods	n(%)	Method	n(%)
n=153*		n=220*		n=154*	
Pipe	95 (62)	Both inhalation & ingestion	89 (40)	Purchased candy/edibles	72 (47)
Vaporizer	77 (50)	Ingestion only	65 (30)	Butters/oils	64 (42)
Joint	47 (31)	Inhale/Smoke only	64 (29)	Homemade baked goods	52 (34)
Water pipe/Bong	44 (29)	Topical	6 (3)	Purchased baked goods	40 (26)
Other	5 (3)	Other	2 (1)	Purchased beverages	21 (14)

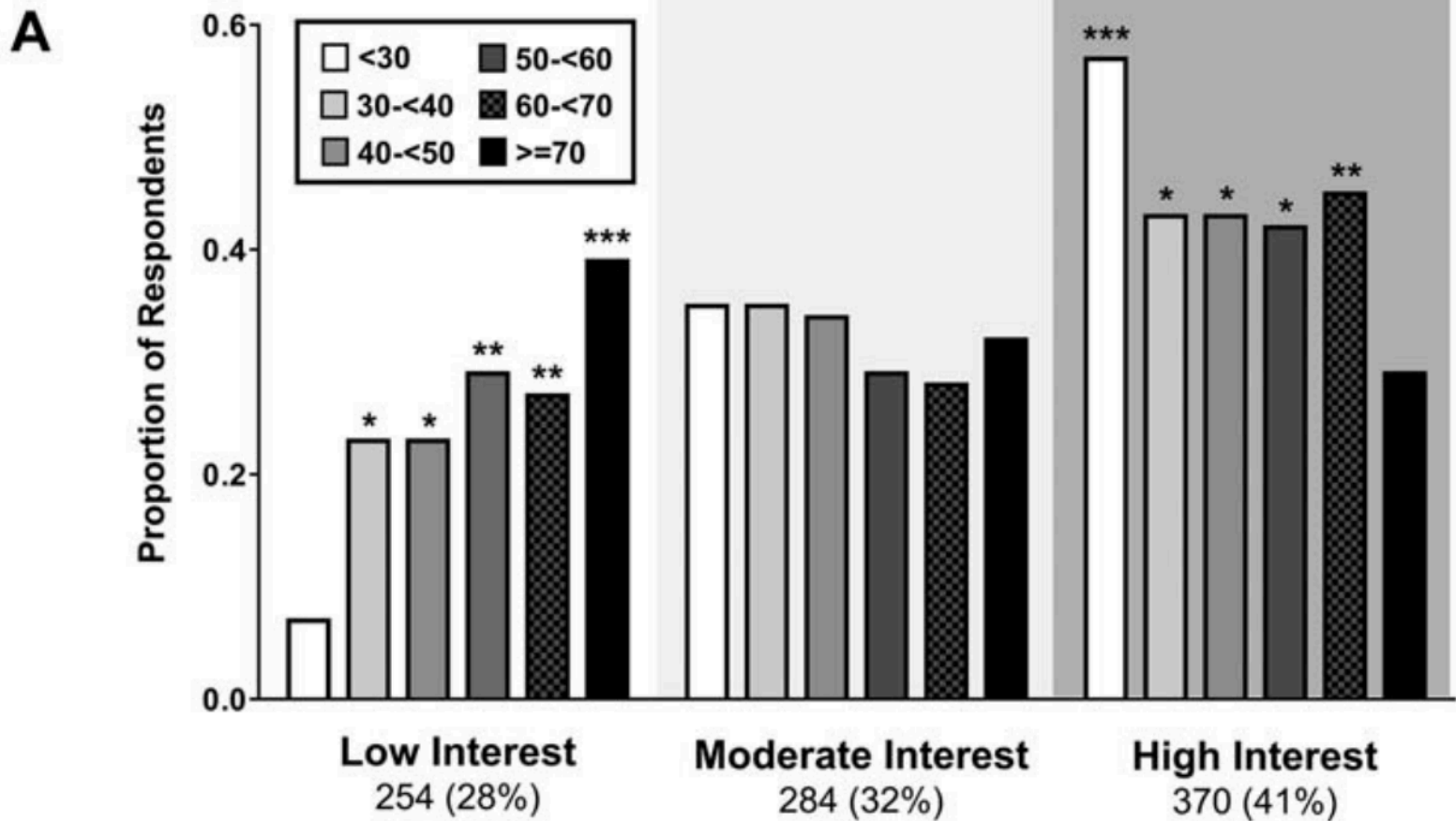
Figure 2. Patterns of cannabis use among active users. *Total percentages may be greater than 100%, because respondents could select more than one option.

Cannabis for Cancer: How Do Patients Use?

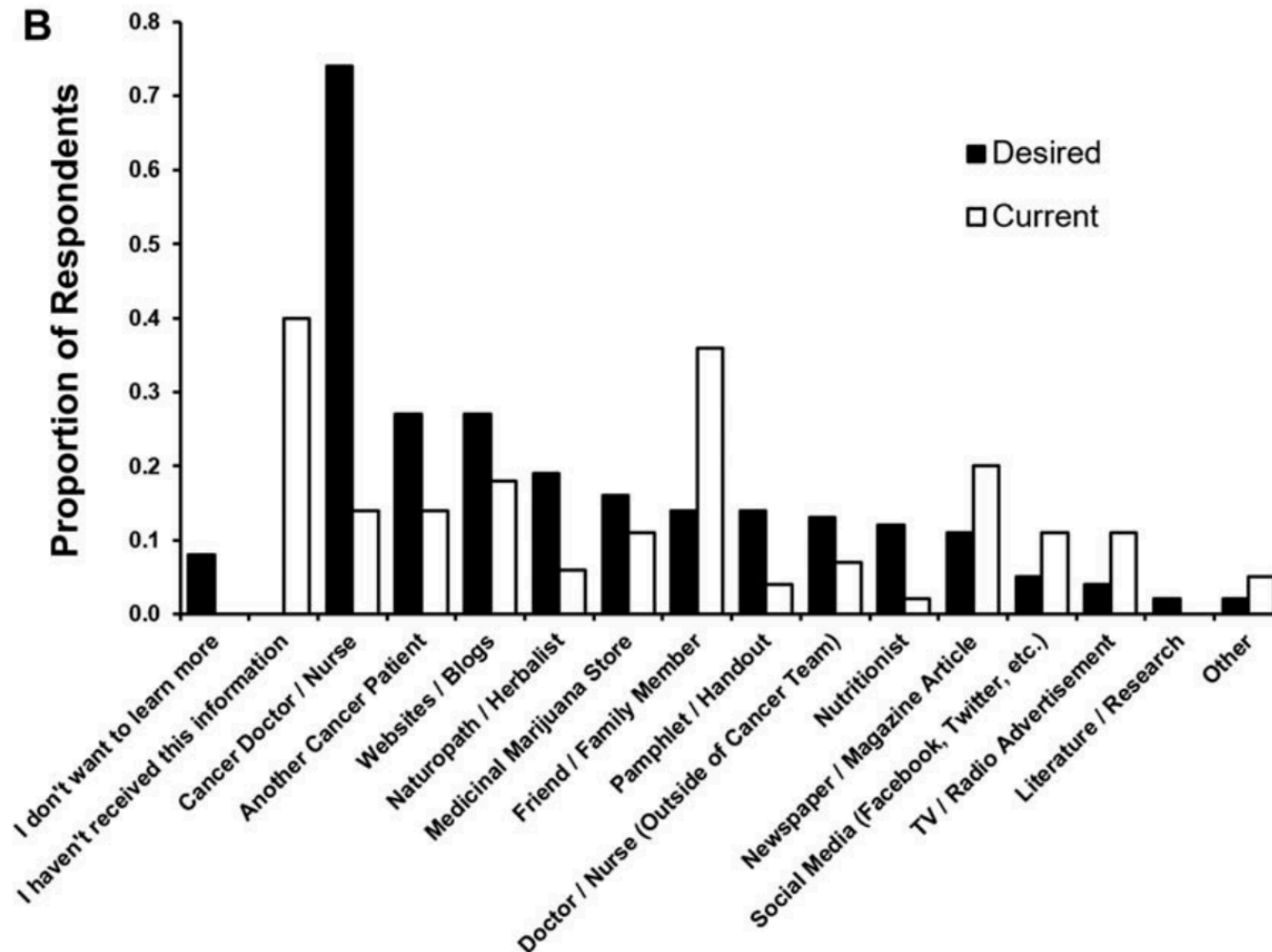
- The most common reason for use was physical symptoms (75%)
 - Many (63%) also used for neuropsychiatric symptoms (e.g., depression).
- Most had strong interest in learning about cannabis (6 on 1-10 scale).
 - Legalization significantly increased likelihood of use.
 - Younger users had greater interest (see next slide).



Cannabis for Cancer: How Do Patients Use?



Desire for information!



Cannabis for Cancer: Drug Interactions

- Some research has examined the metabolism of cannabis and potential drug interactions (~30 studies identified/reviewed in 2014)
- Moderate evidence of drug interactions, via certain,enzyme pathways (CYP450), found in *in vitro* studies
- Not much data on this in humans

Conclusions

- Surveys of cancer patients indicate that patients are using cannabis for symptomatic relief, even if they never used cannabis prior to their diagnosis
- More patients get information from family, friend, newspaper, etc. as opposed to doctor or nurse
- Patients WANT to get the information from their doctor/nurse