

From: [Natasha May](#)
To: [Llew Mills](#)
Subject: Re: media request for comment on
Date: Monday, 22 July 2024 12:33:37 PM

Dear Llew,

Thank you so much for your patience - the article came out yesterday and was very well read with over 50,000 page views and strong attention time (meaning people read through to the end). Thanks so much for your help! Please feel free to get in touch at any time if you hear about anything you think could make a good story in the health area:

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/article/2024/jul/13/cannabis-gummies-like-a-glass-of-wine-with-dinner-for-a-growing-number-of-australians>

Kind regards,
Natasha

On Tue, 16 Jul 2024 at 11:11, Llew Mills <llew.mills@sydney.edu.au> wrote:

HI Natasha

Could you send me a link to the article?

Cheers

Llew

From: Natasha May <natasha.may@theguardian.com>
Sent: Friday, July 5, 2024 11:25 AM
To: Llew Mills <llew.mills@sydney.edu.au>
Subject: Re: media request for comment on

Dear Llew,

Thanks so much for these very helpful responses to my questions - I am very grateful you got that elusive peak hour bus seat and was able to reply to me so quickly!

I will definitely send you the article- it should be out this weekend :)

Kind regards,

Natasha

Natasha May

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I live and work on the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation: sovereignty was never ceded



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On Fri, 5 Jul 2024 at 8:43 AM, Llew Mills <llew.mills@sydney.edu.au> wrote:

Hi Natasha

Thanks for reaching out. Answers to your questions below

- Could you comment on I suppose the contradictions it would appear between people taking weed gummies to relax/help anxiety but also health practitioners warning it can also contribute to poor mental health outcomes including anxiety and panic attacks?

There is a difference between someone taking a drug to relax and taking it to help alleviate symptoms of an anxiety disorder. Let's not confuse those two things.

There is lots of anecdotal evidence from users that cannabis helps with their anxiety, but there are two problems with that:

1. there is a reason we do science, and that is because anecdotal evidence is subject to all sorts of biases caused by folklore and humans' tendency to perceive things the way we want them to be rather than the way they are. Cannabis is an addictive drug, and if you use it regularly and then stop you will go into withdrawal. If you ask many of these people how they *know* that cannabis helps their anxiety they will say because when they stop using it they feel anxious. But anxiety is a symptom of cannabis withdrawal (or indeed withdrawal from any drug) so when people use cannabis to treat their anxiety they may simply be using cannabis to treat a symptom of their cannabis withdrawal.
2. The fact is that at the moment there is no *empirical* evidence for the effectiveness of cannabis for treating anxiety or indeed any mental health condition. That evidence may yet emerge, but at present it is not there. In medicine it is important that clinical treatments are backed up by empirical evidence.

- *How would you compare the potential health (benefits?) of alcohol compared to a weed gummy?*

Taken non-medically I would say they are very similar. Cannabis helps people relax, laugh and heightens the experience of fun things like art and sex. These things can definitely improve one's enjoyment of life. But, once again, let's not confuse taking a drug to relax and taking it to treat a medical condition. No reputable doctor would ever prescribe alcohol for anxiety, and that's because (1) it is addictive (2) there are drugs that have been designed specifically to treat anxiety that work much better. The same applies to cannabis. There are drugs for treating anxiety that have much better empirical evidence for effectiveness, like SSRIs and benzodiazepines. The empirical evidence for cannabis to treat anxiety *may* emerge one day, but it hasn't yet.

Cheers

Llew

p.s. can you send me a copy of the article for my records when it's done? Thanks again for asking!

From: Natasha May <natasha.may@theguardian.com>

Sent: Thursday, July 4, 2024 6:58 PM

To: Llew Mills <llew.mills@sydney.edu.au>

Subject: media request for comment on

Dear Dr Mills,

I am writing an article for the weekend about the trend in more Australians taking weed and mushroom gummies. I have spoken to many case studies who say they take them for anxiety, and generally to help them relax in the same way people would have a glass of wine or a beer.

I was wondering if you might be able to help answer a few questions for me:

- Could you comment on I suppose the contradictions it would appear between people taking weed gummies to relax/help anxiety but also health practitioners warning it can also contribute to poor mental health outcomes including anxiety and panic attacks?

- How would you compare the potential health of alcohol compared to a weed gummy?

Would you be able to provide any written comment for my article before 2PM tomorrow?

Kind regards,

Natasha

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