

Press Release

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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Research Studies Say Marijuana Use Dramatically Increases Risk of Heart Attacks

Marijuana use has risen in the United States, especially in states where it is legal to buy, sell and use the drug recreationally but is it safe to use? Two new studies add to mounting evidence that people who use marijuana are more likely to suffer a heart attack than people who do not use the drug, even among younger and otherwise healthy adults. The findings are from a retrospective study of over 4.6 million people and a meta-analysis of 12 previously published studies being presented at the American College of Cardiology's Annual Scientific Session.

In the retrospective study, researchers found that cannabis users younger than age 50 were over six times as likely to suffer a heart attack compared to non-users. The meta-analysis, which is the largest pooled study to date examining heart attacks and cannabis use, showed a 50% increased risk among those who used the drug.

Researchers say Doctors should ask patients about cannabis use as part of a routine workup to understand patients' overall cardiovascular risk, similar to asking about smoking cigarettes. At a policy level, a fair warning should be made so that the people who are consuming cannabis know that there are risks.

Findings further indicate that over an average follow-up of over three years, cannabis users had more than a sixfold increased risk of heart attack, fourfold increased risk of ischemic stroke, twofold increased risk of heart failure and threefold increased risk of cardiovascular death, heart attack or stroke. All study participants were younger than age 50 and free of significant cardiovascular comorbidities at baseline, with blood pressure and low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol levels within a healthy range and no diabetes, tobacco use or prior coronary artery disease.

Researchers pooled data from 12 previously published research studies that collectively included over 75 million people. The studies were rated as being of moderate to good quality in terms of methodology. Taken individually, seven of the studies found a significant positive association between cannabis use and heart attack incidence, while four showed no significant difference and one showed a slightly negative association. When the researchers pooled the data from all studies and analyzed it together, they found a significant positive association, with active cannabis

users being 1.5 times as likely to suffer a heart attack compared with those who aren't current users.

More recent studies from France also indicate using marijuana doubles the risk of dying from heart disease, according to a new analysis of pooled medical data involving 200 million people mostly between the ages of 19 and 59. What was particularly significant was that the concerned patients hospitalized for these disorders were young (and thus, not likely to have their clinical features due to tobacco smoking) and with no history of cardiovascular disorder or cardiovascular risk factors.

Compared to nonusers, those who used cannabis also had a 29% higher risk for heart attacks and a 20% higher risk for stroke. The connection between marijuana and heart disease raises serious questions about the assumption that cannabis imposes little cardiovascular risk.

Marijuana use has become extremely prevalent in society, which necessitates researchers to keep informed and calls for doctor-patient discussion regarding the risks of use. Concomitant drug use should also be discussed as research demonstrates marijuana use is associated with increased tobacco and alcohol use. The emerging issue of unregulated marijuana products with high potency and unknown consequences should not be ignored.

The American College of Cardiology (ACC) is the global leader in transforming cardiovascular care and improving heart health for all. As the preeminent source of professional medical education for the entire cardiovascular care team since 1949, ACC credentials cardiovascular professionals in over 140 countries who meet stringent qualifications and leads in the formation of health policy, standards and guidelines.

SAFE is the only alcohol and substance use prevention agency in Glen Cove whose mission is to eliminate alcohol and substance use in Glen Cove. Its Coalition is concerned about cannabis use- especially in youth as their brains are developing. The Coalition is conducting a prevention awareness campaign entitled "Keeping Glen Cove SAFE; Underage Marijuana Use," to educate and update the community regarding marijuana use and its negative consequences. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition or visit SAFE's website to learn more about Cannabis/Marijuana use at www.safeglencove.org.