

No detectable association between frequency of marijuana use and health or healthcare utilization

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(Boston)—Researchers from Boston Medical Center (BMC) and Boston University School of Medicine (BUSM) have found frequency of marijuana use was not significantly associated with health services utilization or health status. These findings currently appear online in the *Journal of General Internal Medicine*.

As [marijuana](#)'s legal status changes across the US, its impact on health has become of great interest. Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug, yet its impact on health and [healthcare utilization](#) has not been studied extensively.

The researchers studied 589 adults who screened positive for drug use at a primary care visit. Those patients were asked about their drug use, their emergency room use and hospitalizations, and their overall health status. In addition, information about other medical diagnoses was obtained from their medical records. They found the vast majority of the study sample (84 percent) used marijuana, 25 percent used cocaine, 23 percent opioids and eight percent used other drugs; 58 percent reported using marijuana but no other drugs. They also found no differences between daily marijuana users and those using no marijuana in their use of the emergency room, in hospitalizations, medical diagnoses or their health status.

According to the researchers it is common for users of [illicit drugs](#) to use

both marijuana and another drug; therefore, knowing the incremental effects of marijuana on health in that circumstance is important.

"Even though we could not compare marijuana users to those who used no drugs at all, our findings suggest that marijuana use has little measurable effect on self-reported health or healthcare utilization in adults using drugs identified in a primary care clinic," said lead author Daniel Fuster, MD, a postdoctoral scholar from the Clinical Addiction Research and Education Unit at BMC and BUSM.

Provided by Boston University Medical Center

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