

# Marijuana use has no effect on kidney transplant outcomes

November 15 2018

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A new study in *Clinical Kidney Journal* indicates that the usage of marijuana by kidney donors has no measurable effect upon the outcomes of kidney transplants for donors or recipients. This study is the first to investigate the effect of marijuana use by live kidney donors.

The use of marijuana in the United States has been steadily increasing over the last 10 years. Marijuana use has more than doubled between 2001 and 2013, with 54.1% of adolescents claiming to have initiated marijuana use by the age of 21.

There is a shortage of kidneys available for transplantation. As of 2018 there are nearly 100,000 patients on the waiting list for donor [kidney](#) transplants, with an average wait-time of 3 to 10 years depending on region and blood type. Some patients do not survive long enough on dialysis to receive a [transplant](#).

Based on National Kidney Registry recommendations that exclude substance abusers from donation, transplant institutions may refuse live kidney donors who have a history of marijuana use; however, there was previously no evidence pertaining specifically to the donor or recipient outcomes.

Researchers in this study reviewed living kidney transplants performed between January 2000 and May 2016 in a single academic institution. Donor and recipient groups were each divided into two groups by donor marijuana usage, comparing the outcomes of the transplants using a variety of tests. Researchers reviewed 294 living donor medical records, including 31 marijuana using donors. Researchers also reviewed 230 living kidney recipient records, including 27 marijuana using kidney recipients.

The results show no difference in donor or recipient perioperative characteristics or postoperative outcomes based upon [donor](#) marijuana use, indicating that there were no long-term differences in kidney function between those who used marijuana and those who did not.

"A significant shortage in available potential [kidney donors](#) exists," said the paper's lead author, Duane Baldwin. "Our goal with this study was to

start a conversation on this topic and to encourage other centers to study this important question. It is our hope that considering [marijuana](#) using donors could ultimately save lives."

**More information:** David Ruckle et al, Should donors who have used marijuana be considered candidates for living kidney donation?, *Clinical Kidney Journal* (2018). DOI: [10.1093/ckj/sfy107](https://doi.org/10.1093/ckj/sfy107)

Provided by Oxford University Press

Citation: Marijuana use has no effect on kidney transplant outcomes (2018, November 15)  
retrieved 6 May 2024 from  
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-11-marijuana-effect-kidney-transplant-outcomes.html>

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