

# Cannabis legalization not tied to higher health care utilization

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(HealthDay)—Legalization of recreational cannabis is not associated

with changes in health care utilization, as measured by length of stay or health care costs, according to a study published in the May issue of *BMJ Open*.

Francesca N. Delling, M.D., M.P.H., from the University of California in San Francisco, and colleagues used the Healthcare Cost and Utilisation Project inpatient databases (2010 to 2014) to compare changes in rates of health care utilization and diagnoses in Colorado, which was the first state to legalize recreational cannabis, versus New York and Oklahoma (control states). Analysis included 28 million individuals and over 16 million hospitalizations across the three states.

The researchers found that compared with New York and Oklahoma, cannabis abuse hospitalizations increased in Colorado (risk ratios, 1.27 and 1.16, respectively) after legalization. There was a reduction in total admissions noted in Colorado, but only compared to Oklahoma (risk ratio, 0.97). Compared to the control states, length of stay and costs did not change significantly in Colorado. An increase in [motor vehicle accidents](#), [alcohol abuse](#), and overdose injury, as well as a reduction in chronic pain admissions were the postlegalization changes most consistent with previously published evidence.

"Such population-level effects may help guide future decisions regarding cannabis use, prescription and policy," the authors write.

**More information:** [Abstract/Full Text](#)

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