

Using cannabis can ease cravings for street-level drugs, new research suggests

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New findings from researchers at the University of British Columbia suggest that cannabis could play a role in addressing the ongoing opioid overdose crisis.

The work is [published](#) in the journal *Addictive Behaviors*.

The publication from Dr. Hudson Reddon, alongside UBC Okanagan's Dr. Zach Walsh and UBC Vancouver's Dr. M-J Milloy, observes that using cannabis is associated with decreased use of crystal methamphetamine among people at highest risk of overdose in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

About 45% of the study's participants reported using cannabis to manage their cravings for [stimulant drugs](#) in the last six months, including powder cocaine, crack cocaine and methamphetamines. A notable reduction in crystal meth use was observed among those who used cannabis for craving management. This association was not significant for crack cocaine users.

Dr. Reddon, the study's lead researcher, emphasized the potential of cannabis as a harm-reduction strategy.

"Our findings are not conclusive but do add to the growing scientific evidence that cannabis might be a beneficial tool for some people who want to better control their unregulated stimulant use, particularly for people who use crystal meth," says Dr. Reddon. "This suggests a new direction for harm reduction strategies among people who use drugs."

Dr. Walsh, a Clinical Psychology Professor at UBCO and a leading substance use researcher, highlighted the importance of further investigation: "While these findings are promising, they underscore the need for more comprehensive studies to understand the full potential of cannabis in the context of the overdose crisis."

The research used data from a questionnaire administered to individuals concurrently using cannabis and unregulated drugs, including stimulants and opioids, in Vancouver. It is the latest in a series of studies

investigating the potential of [cannabis](#) to address the overdose crisis led by Drs. Milloy and Walsh and other colleagues at the British Columbia Centre on Substance Use.

Dr. Milloy is a research scientist at the BC Centre on Substance Use who holds the Canopy Growth Professorship in Cannabis Science. Their work is supported by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the United States National Institute on Drug Abuse.

More information: Hudson Reddon et al, Cannabis use to manage stimulant cravings among people who use unregulated drugs, *Addictive Behaviors* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.addbeh.2023.107867](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2023.107867)

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