

Study reveals cannabis users age faster

14 November 2016, by David Stacey



A study carried out by researchers from The University of Western Australia has found significant detrimental effects to the vascular system from smoking cannabis, including early ageing.

The study discovered that long-term use of cannabis increased the biological age of those studied by 11 per cent, due to the impact of the hardening of arteries in those who used the drug. For example, a 30-year-old person would have a [biological age](#) of around 33 years old.

It is well established that cannabis use has toxic effects on the brain, lungs, respiratory system and many parts of the reproductive system, and has been linked to a variety of cancers. However this is the first study to show that varied [toxic effects](#) are not just related to malfunction of organs, but are related to an acceleration of the ageing process.

The Brisbane-based study compared 11 cannabis-only users, 504 [tobacco users](#), 114 combination tobacco and cannabis smokers and 534 non-smokers over a five-year period. Those with known cardiovascular disease or acute exposure to alcohol, amphetamine, heroin or methadone were

not part of the study.

Associate Professor Stuart Reece, from UWA's School of Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences, said the results of the study suggested patients exposed to cannabis aged much faster than other groups in the study, including tobacco users.

"We found that for those who used cannabis over a long time, not only does it age you, it increases ageing at an exponential rate over time which is alarming," Professor Reece said.

"The level of cannabis exposure in the group studied was much higher than we have seen reported before in other studies for developed nations."

Professor Reece said it was concerning that this was the first study to look at the [long-term effects of smoking cannabis](#) on the cardiovascular system and there were comparatively few studies across the world looking at its long-term effects.

"It is important to the health of populations worldwide that such research be continued, with the study highlighting the large-scale costs to the health system from [cannabis](#) use," he said.

The study has been published in the *British Medical Journal Open*.

More information: Albert Stuart Reece et al. Cannabis exposure as an interactive cardiovascular risk factor and accelerant of organismal ageing: a longitudinal study, *BMJ Open* (2016). [DOI: 10.1136/bmjopen-2016-011891](#)

Provided by University of Western Australia

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