

## **Identifying aberrant use of medical marijuana: Research protocol and preliminary results**

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Objectives: The use of marijuana in medical contexts has increased in the past decades globally and in Israel. One of the negative consequences of marijuana use in non-medical context is aberrant use and addiction. However, up-to-date there is no clear definition or validated instruments for assessing aberrant use of medical marijuana (MM). the aim of the present study is to construct and validate a brief instrument for assessing aberrant use of MM in three phases.

Materials and methods: in this study, we systematically reviewed qualitative research focusing on narratives of positive and negative consequences of cannabis use among patients prescribed MM and conducted a qualitative investigation focusing on aberrant use and addiction among 15 MM patients.

Results and conclusions: findings from the first two phases of the study highlight several aspects of aberrant MM use: (a) physical dependence (b) psychological dependence (c) cognitive impairments (d) non-compliance with MM indications (dose etc.) (e) self-stigma and shame associated with MM use; and (f) impaired psychosocial functioning due to excessive MM use. We conclude that MM may serve as an effective and relatively safe medication, yet patients' concerns regarding its effect should be explored. Based on these findings, I will present a research protocol for constructing and validating a brief screening tool for aberrant MM use based on a sample of 200 patients prescribed MM. With the increase in MM use globally, this

instrument will allow clinicians and researchers to assess, monitor and address problematic MM use and related harms.

Conflict of interest: None.