Research Findings: Opioid Crisis and Cannabis Legalization

The *Journal of the American Medical Association* (2018) reported that states which have legalized adult-use of cannabis experienced a 6.38% lower rate of opioid prescribing. The study used all captured Medicaid prescription data between 2011-2016. Both medical cannabis laws and adult-use cannabis laws were associated with lower opioid prescribing rates (5.88% and 6.38% lower, respectively). Total cannabis legalization reduces prescribing opioids more than just legalizing medical cannabis. ¹

The *National Bureau Of Economic Research* (2015) calculated there was a 28% reduction of opioid substance abuse treatment admissions occurs in states where access to cannabis "is easiest (both legally and practically)." Legalized cannabis resulted in a reduction of both opioid addiction and overdose deaths. Some citizens find cannabis preferable to opioids.²

*Journal of American Medical Association* finds a significant correlation of lower opioid overdose in states with medical cannabis laws³

The *Journal of Health Economics* (2020) concluded that cannabis access laws could play a meaningful role in addressing the opioid epidemic.⁴

**Health Benefits**

*Open Neurology Journal* (2012) noted that, "In the past decade, the scope and rigor of research has increased dramatically. Evidence is accumulating that cannabinoids may be useful medicine." Cannabis has been found effective for nausea, vomiting, weight gain and chronic pain. Recent cannabis research indicates effectiveness in treating painful peripheral neuropathy and muscle.⁵

**Lifetime Dependence Risk (%)**

The Mayo Clinic determined addiction rates to major drugs: Nicotine (32%), Heroin (23%), cocaine (17%), alcohol (15%) and marijuana (9%).⁶ Heroin is an opioid that is not available by prescription in the US - the risk of addiction to prescription opioids may be as high as 11.5%.⁷

---

https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/2677000?appid=ssweb


