

Cannabis Use and Mania Symptoms: a Systematic Review and Meta-analysis

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Introduction

Whilst cannabis use appears to be a causal risk factor for the development of schizophrenia-related psychosis, associations with mania remain relatively unknown.

Objectives

This review aimed to examine the impact of cannabis use on the incidence of manic symptoms and on their occurrence in those with pre-existing bipolar disorder

Methods

A systematic review of the scientific literature using the PRISMA guidelines. PsychINFO, Cochrane, Scopus, Embase and MEDLINE databases were searched for prospective studies.

Results

Six articles met inclusion criteria. These sampled 2,391 individuals who had experienced mania symptoms. The mean length of follow up was 3.9 years. Studies support an association between cannabis use and the exacerbation of manic symptoms in those with previously diagnosed bipolar disorder. Furthermore, a meta-analysis of two studies suggests that cannabis use is associated with an approximately 3-fold (Odds Ratio: 2.97; 95% CI: 1.80 to 4.90) increased risk for the new onset of manic symptoms.

Conclusions

Our findings whilst tentative, suggest that cannabis use may worsen the occurrence of manic symptoms in those diagnosed with bipolar disorder and may also act as a causal risk factor in the incidence of manic symptoms. This underscores the importance of discouraging cannabis use among youth and those with bipolar disorder to help prevent chronic psychiatric morbidity. More high quality prospective studies are required to fully elucidate how cannabis use may contribute to the development of mania over time.