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Cannabis use in the UK

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Aims

There is a paucity of research, especially in the UK, which investigates cannabis use patterns, motivations for use, and the negative outcomes in medical cannabis users (MCU), and how this compares to recreational cannabis users (RCU). Therefore, the current study aims to investigate the differences between RCU and MCU in the UK.

Design

Using a cross-sectional survey design, data was collected online using Question-Pro.

Setting

Research was conducted between 14.06.2022-14.07.2022 in the community and via medical clinics.

Participants

Participants were RCU and MCU currently living in the UK. RCU were invited to take part via social media. MCU were recruited from Sapphire Medical Clinics which provides specialist treatment with cannabis-based medicinal products in the UK.

Measurement

The survey assessed participants' demographic data, cannabis use frequency, and cannabis use problems (CUDIT-R), PTSD (PCL-5), depression (CES-D), anxiety (STAI), and cannabis use motives (CMMQ).

Findings and Conclusions

161 participants completed the survey. MCU were significantly older, used cannabis more often and had higher "Sleep" motive ($p < 0.05$). RCU had significantly higher scores on several motives (e.g., "Enjoyment", "Coping") and higher state anxiety scores ($p < 0.05$). The two groups did not significantly differ on cannabis use problems, and "Low Risk" motive, as well as PTSD, depression, and trait anxiety scores ($p > 0.05$).

The current study demonstrates a significant distinction in use patterns and motivations between RCU and MCU, but also shows areas of potential overlap. These findings hold significant implications for future research, clinical practice, and legislation.