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Alcohol And Cannabis Use Among Women With Infertility: Associations With Psychological Distress, Attempts To Conceive, And Engagement In Fertility Treatment

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Title: Alcohol and cannabis use among women with infertility: Associations with psychological distress, attempts to conceive, and engagement in fertility treatment

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Objective: An infertility diagnosis can lead to distress. Although substance use is common and can also lead to distress, little is known about use among those with an infertility diagnosis. This is important since substance use can have implications for fertility. The purpose of this study was to estimate the rate of alcohol and cannabis use among women with infertility and examine whether substance use had associations with psychiatric symptoms, attempts to conceive, and engagement in fertility treatments.

Materials and Methods: Patients from one healthcare system were eligible if they received a female infertility diagnosis within the past 2 years. Participants (N=188) completed an online questionnaire on their alcohol use, cannabis use, and psychiatric symptoms.

Results: The rates of hazardous alcohol use, any cannabis use, and hazardous cannabis use were 30.3%, 30.9%, and 8.5%, respectively. Hazardous alcohol use was not associated with depression or anxiety ($p > .05$). Those with any cannabis use were more likely to have higher depression scores than those without ($p = .02$). Those with hazardous cannabis use were also more likely to have higher depression scores ($p = .001$) and higher anxiety scores ($p = .03$). Substance use was not associated with actively trying to conceive. However, participants pursuing fertility treatments were less likely to engage in hazardous alcohol use ($p = .02$).

Conclusion: Cannabis use was associated with depression and anxiety scores, suggesting that cannabis may be used for coping. Though many women engage in hazardous alcohol or cannabis use, pursuing fertility treatments may serve as a protective factor.

Keywords: Female Infertility, Substance Use, Cannabis, Alcohol, Depression, Anxiety, Fertility Treatment