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## Medicinal Cannabis Use and Driving by Clients of NSW Health Cannabis Clinics

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## Background



- Research completed as part of the larger study:

### **Kronic in the Clinic: The use of Synthetic Cannabinoids by NSW Cannabis Clinic Clients**

- Explored the perceptions and experiences of treatment seeking cannabis users regarding their cannabis and synthetic cannabinoid use.
- 154 participants from specialised cannabis treatment clinics of five participating NSW Health Local Health Districts
- Inclusion criteria: Treatment seeking users of cannabis



## Method



- Recruitment Timeline June 2015 to April 2016
- Interviews:
  - Conducted face-to-face
  - Retrospective, structured questionnaires included:
    - Demographic information
    - Drug use history
    - Drug Use Motives (DUMQ) for cannabis & synthetic cannabinoids
    - Acute subjective effects of cannabis & synthetic cannabinoid use
    - Cannabis dependence (ICD-10)
    - Medical cannabis use
    - Driving and cannabis & synthetic cannabinoid use
    - Physical health and Quality of Life (SF-36v2)
    - Mental Health (DASS-21)
    - Reasons for and for not using synthetic cannabinoids
    - Comparison of synthetic cannabinoids & cannabis



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## Method



- We explored:
  - Cannabis and synthetic cannabinoid use history and patterns
  - Effects and consequences of cannabis and synthetic cannabinoid use
  - Use of cannabis for medicinal purposes
  - Frequency of driving under the influence of cannabis and synthetic cannabinoids



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## Demographics



Demographic	Total (n = 154)
Age Median (IQR)	35 (10)
Age Range n (%)	
18 - 35	80 (52%)
36+	74 (48%)
Male n (%)	110 (71%)
Education ≤ Year 10 n (%)	84 (55%)
ATSI status n (%)	16 (11%)
Single relationship status n (%)	110 (72%)
Live Alone n (%)	106 (69%)
Government benefits n (%)	113 (73%)

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## Use of Cannabis for Medicinal Purposes



- Medicinal use of cannabis
  - Was cannabis used to reduce the symptoms of a physical or mental health condition?
  - If so, what type of condition?
  - Use of cannabis for general pain reduction
  - Age of first medicinal use
  - Duration of medicinal use
  - Reasons for stopping



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Use of Cannabis for Medicinal Purposes



- Of 154 users of cannabis, 59% reported using cannabis to reduce the symptoms of physical or mental illness (91/154)
- 70% reported using for general pain relief (83/118)
- Median age of first medicinal use = 20 years (IQR 9)
- 59% reported duration of use > 5 years (58/98)



Use of Cannabis for Medicinal Purposes



Condition *	N †	(%)	Effectiveness # % Quite and Extremely (n)
Depression	55	60.4	61.1% (33)
Anxiety	19	20.9	52.6% (10)
Chronic pain	17	18.7	64.7% (11)
Nausea	8	8.8	100% (8)
Migraine	7	7.7	71.4% (5)
Weight loss	4	4.4	75.0% (3)
Other	27	29.7	66.7% (18)
General Pain ^	82	70.3	63.9% (53)

# Effectiveness range: 0 = Not, 1 = Slightly, 2 = Moderately, 3 = Quite, 4 = Extremely

\* Multiple responses allowed

† Total N = 91

^ Total N = 118

# Use of Cannabis for Medicinal Purposes



- 51% participants reported current use of cannabis for medicinal purposes (46/91)

Reasons for stopping medicinal use	% (n) <sup>†</sup>
Problems with dependence	51% (43)
Medical condition went away	16% (7)
Did not reduce symptoms of illness	9% (4)
Stopped working	9% (4)
Relationship problems	7% (3)
Illegal Status	4% (2)
Unacceptable side-effects	4% (2)
Other	13% (6)

<sup>†</sup> N = 45; multiple responses allowed

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# Driving under the influence



- Driving under the influence of cannabis and synthetic cannabinoids
  - Ever driven ?
  - Ever driven within 3 hours of using either substance ?
  - If so, how often ?



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## Driving and Cannabis

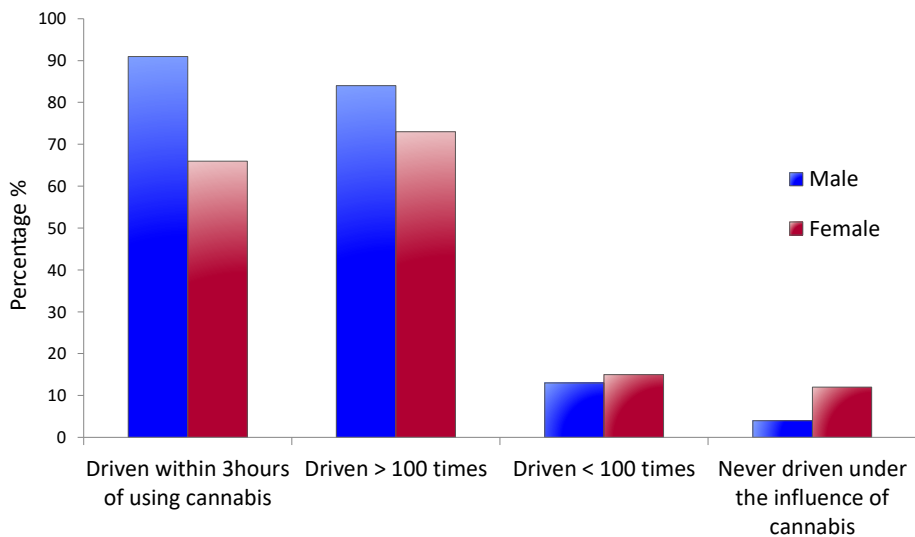


- Of the 154 participants, 89% ( $n=137$ ) had ever driven.
- Of these:
  - 94% reported ever driving within three hours of consuming cannabis (129/137)
  - 81% reported driving more than 100 times (111/137)
  - 6% had never driven whilst under the influence of cannabis (8/137)
- Figures reflect a high prevalence of driving



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## Driving and Cannabis



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## Driving and Synthetic Cannabinoids



- Of 154 participants, 53% ( $n = 82$ ) had used synthetic cannabinoids
- Of these:
  - 90% of these had ever driven (74/82)
  - 51% reported driving within three hours of consuming synthetic cannabinoids (38/74)
  - 24% reported driving more than 100 times (18/74)
  - 46% reported never driving whilst under the influence of synthetic cannabinoids (34/74)



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## Summary



- Use of medical cannabis by clients attending cannabis clinics is common – 59%
  - Depression, anxiety and pain are most common reasons
  - Dependence was a concern for ~1/2 sampled population
- Driving under the influence of cannabis by clients attending cannabis clinics was almost universal
  - 94% within 3 hours, many frequently
  - 51% of synthetic cannabis users within 3 hours – concerning re effects

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**Thank you**



**Questions?**







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## References



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