People With Different Diseases Use Medical Marijuana Differently

For example, those with cancer are more likely to use cannabis containing higher amounts of tetrahydrocannabinol.

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Medical marijuana is legal in 31 states, affording many people with cancer another option for the alleviation of their symptoms and the side effects of treatment. Now, a new study published in the Journal of Palliative Medicine has found that people with and without cancer use different forms of cannabis, reports NYU Langone Health.

Researchers examined data from 11,590 men and women in New York who purchased and used marijuana products from Columbia Care LLC, a dispensary licensed in New York, from January 2016 to December 2017.

People with cancer were found to prefer medical marijuana with higher amounts of tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, which is known to relieve symptoms of cancer as well as the side effects of treatment, such as chronic pain, weight loss and nausea. Those with cancer were also more likely to take oil droplets containing medical marijuana under the tongue than to vape.

But people with epilepsy and multiple sclerosis, for example, seemed to prefer marijuana with high concentrations of cannabidiol (CBD). (Research has shown that CBD reduces seizures and inflammation.)

“Our study provides valuable new information about how people with cancer are using marijuana,” said Benjamin Han, MD, MPH, study senior investigator and an assistant professor of medicine and population health at New York University School of Medicine.

He concludes, “In the absence of strong clinical research data for medical marijuana, identifying patterns of use offers some sense of how to guide patients who come in with questions for using medical marijuana and what may or may not help them.”

The study had several limitations, such as not including participants’ type of cancer, how much of the marijuana purchased was used or whether the marijuana was used for symptoms unrelated to cancer. But the fact remained: People with cancer and those without had distinctly different patterns of marijuana use.

Next, researchers will look into how medical marijuana affects people’s response to therapy and functional status at different stages of their disease. In addition, they want to delve into the risks and side effects of this treatment.

For more on cancer and marijuana, click here.

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