Does the Availability of Medical Marijuana Decrease Opiate Use? Surveying the Landscape

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Chronic Pain Treatment
- Opioids were involved in more than 42,000 deaths in America in 2016, two-thirds of all of drug overdose deaths, according to the CDC.
- More research is needed to understand the full impact of the legalization of marijuana on the public health, but research indicates that opiate use is decreasing in states which have legalized marijuana.²⁻³ Twenty nine states have passed laws that recognize the medical value of cannabis.
- It has been established that cannabis has less morbidity and mortality risk than opiates. While neither Medicaid nor Medicare will reimburse patients for marijuana, it is easier to obtain for chronic pain treatment than opioids in many cases, and most Americans (6 in 10) support its legalization, according to Pew Research.

Barriers
- Lack of clinical trials of the therapeutic efficacy of cannabis.
- Cannabis is still a DEA Schedule 1 Drug.
- No currently accepted medical use according to the DEA.
- Lack of insurance coverage.

Medical Uses
- Medical marijuana may be used to:
  - Ease pain (including chronic and nerve pain)
  - Control nausea (such as that caused by chemotherapy)
  - Stimulate appetite (to avoid weight loss due to illness)

Information for Librarians/Resources
- American Society of Addiction Medicine: Marijuana Advocacy Toolkit
- Drug Policy Alliance Fact Sheet: Marijuana and Opiates
- National Institute on Drug Abuse: Marijuana as Medicine
- University of Washington Alcohol and Drug Abuse Institute: Learn About Marijuana

References