Psychological and psychosocial interventions for cannabis cessation in adults: a systematic review short report

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Declared competing interests of authors: none

Disclaimer: this report contains language that may offend some readers.

Published July 2015
DOI: 10.3310/hta19560

Plain English summary

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Health Technology Assessment 2015; Vol. 19: No. 56
DOI: 10.3310/hta19560

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Regular users of cannabis risk become dependent on the drug. Treatments aiming to reduce cannabis use in regular users have focused on psychosocial and psychological interventions such as cognitive–behavioural therapy (CBT), which aims to manage cannabis use by managing negative behaviours through changing the way the participant thinks or behaves; motivational interviewing (MI), which helps people change behaviour by resolving ambivalence and improving motivation; and contingency management, voucher incentives for reductions in cannabis use. This systematic review assesses which treatment (or combination of treatments) is most effective at reducing cannabis use. Studies were of low quality and differed in the treatments they tested and the participants they recruited. We divided studies into those assessing ‘general’ cannabis users and those assessing cannabis users who also had a psychiatric condition. In the ‘general’ studies, CBT was more effective than no treatment in six studies, but this effect was assessed long term in only one study. Results were mixed when CBT was compared with brief MI and when brief MI was compared with no treatment. CBT with contingency management was more effective than CBT alone in the long term. In studies in people with psychiatric conditions, CBT showed limited benefit when compared with usual treatment; however, results were difficult to interpret owing to study design. Future research should focus on the number of treatment sessions required, effect of participant recruitment method on results (i.e. whether or not participants volunteered), selection of appropriate measures to assess changes in cannabis use, use of no-treatment control groups and long-term follow-up.
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This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HTA programme as project number 13/70/01. The contractual start date was in March 2014. The draft report began editorial review in May 2014 and was accepted for publication in November 2014. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HTA editors and publisher have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors’ report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the draft document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

This report presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HTA programme or the Department of Health. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HTA programme or the Department of Health.

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