Pediatric specialists’ concerns regarding marijuana use among adolescent patients

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Background
- Youth with chronic medical conditions report similar levels of marijuana use compared to healthy peers (Wisk & Weitzman, 2016)
- Marijuana use is associated with poor physical and mental health outcomes (Hall & Degenhardt, 2014) and treatment nonadherence (Weitzman, et al. 2015)
- Controversy surrounding the use of marijuana as medicine may send conflicting messages to youth with chronic conditions
- Youth may see subspecialty care as their medical home because of frequent visits and likely refer to these providers for disease-specific health information
- Little is known about the concerns of pediatric specialists regarding marijuana use among their adolescent patients

Objectives
- Assess pediatric specialists’ concerns regarding marijuana use among adolescent patients
- Determine differences in concerns across subspecialty type

Methods
- Sample consisted of U.S. endocrinologists and rheumatologists who regularly see 14-17 year old patients
- Recruited through an online survey delivered by professional network mailing lists
- Descriptive statistics used to characterize the overall sample and chi-square tests to compare subspecialty type by sample characteristics
- Logistic regression to examine associations between concerns and subspecialty type

Results
- 232 survey responses (64.7%/35.3%) by pediatric endocrinologists/rheumatologists
- Endocrinologists were more likely to report being moderately/very concerned about marijuana’s impact on aspects of their adolescent patients’ care (see Figure 2)
- No significant differences by subspecialty in provider concern regarding the general impact of marijuana (Figure 1b) or marijuana as medicine (Figure 1c)

Discussion
- Overall, there is a high level of concern among providers regarding marijuana use among adolescent patients
- Most providers report discomfort with marijuana as medicine and would not recommend it to their patients
- Concerns surrounding the disease-specific impact of marijuana on aspects of patient care differ by subspecialty

Conclusion
- Pediatric specialists report high levels of concern regarding marijuana use among adolescent patients, however, concerns vary by disease-context
- Further investigation is needed as to how specialists’ concerns influence health messages provided to their patients and patient families

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