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## Effect of continued cannabis use on medication adherence in the first two years following onset of psychosis

Tabea Schoeler, Natalia Petros, Marta Di Forti, Ewa Klamerus, Enrico Foglia, Robin Murray, Sagnik Bhattacharyya\*

Department of Psychosis Studies, Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience, King's College London, De Crespigny Park, London SE5 8AF, UK

\*Corresponding author. Tel.: +44 207 848 0955; fax +44 207 848 0976.  
sagnik.2.bhattacharyya@kcl.ac.uk

### Abstract

Uncertainty exists whether the use of non-prescription psychoactive substances following onset of a first episode of psychosis (FEP), in particular cannabis use, affects medication adherence. Data from FEP patients (N=233) obtained through prospective assessments measured medication adherence and pattern of cannabis and other substance use in the first two years following onset of psychosis. Multiple logistic regression analyses were employed to compare the different substance use groups with regard to risk of medication non-adherence, while controlling for confounders. The proportion of non-adherent patients was higher in those who continued using high-potency forms of cannabis (skunk-like) following the onset (83%) when compared to never regular users (51%), corresponding to an Odds Ratio (OR) of 5.26[95% Confidence Interval (CI) 1.91-15.68]. No significant increases in risk were present in those who used cannabis more sporadically or used milder forms of cannabis (hash-like). Other substances did not make an independent contribution in this model, including cigarette use ([OR 0.88, 95% CI 0.41-1.89]), alcohol use ([OR 0.66, 95% CI 0.27-1.64]) or regular use of other illicit drugs ([OR 1.03, 95% CI 0.34-3.15]) following the onset. These results suggest that continued use of high-potency cannabis following the onset of psychosis may adversely affect medication adherence.

Keywords: Cannabis, THC, first episode psychosis, epidemiology

### 1. Introduction

Despite the effectiveness of antipsychotic medication in preventing relapse following the first episode of psychosis (FEP) (Leucht et al., 2012), relapse is a common occurrence, often due to non-adherence to prescribed medication (Verdoux et al., 2000; Coldham et al., 2002; Üçok et al., 2006; Morken et al., 2008; Gearing et al., 2009; Hill et al., 2010; Lambert et al., 2010; Caseiro et al., 2012; Levy et al., 2012; Barbeito et al., 2013; Hui et al., 2013). Although the reported rates vary considerably across studies (Sendt et al., 2015), estimates from systematic reviews indicate that an average of 26% of patients with psychosis do not adhere to their

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