

Letter to the Editor

“Beyond Simulation – Therapeutic Cannabis and Driving”

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The article by Di Cano and colleagues “Effects of therapeutic cannabis on simulated driving: A pilot study” is an important reminder that further research is needed to understand the risks of cannabis. In sum, Di Cano et al. study findings point to a simple conclusion, cannabis effects driving behavior – speed, coordination, and driving control, for example. However, whether it is used for therapeutic or recreational purposes, there is a dearth of evidenced-based knowledge about its impact on driving.

There is a direct relationship between THC concentration and impaired driving ability; and cannabis, even if prescribed legally for therapeutic conditions, can be a major factor involved in vehicle crashes including ones that cause serious injury and fatality (Elvik, 2013; NIDA, 2019; CCSA, 2019); but, the scope of its impact tends to be equivocal. For example, a large case-control study by the US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration found no significant increase of driving accidents attributed to cannabis after controlling for various drivers’ background characteristics (Compton & Berning, 2015).

Understanding the direct relationship between cannabis and driving behavior is no simple feat because of its residual

presence in body fluids days and weeks after use as well as its use with other intoxicating substances especially alcohol. Simulated research studies of Di Cano et al., and others are important; and, more evidenced based knowledge about cannabis from multiple perspectives is needed for informed policy, regulation, and therapeutic decision-making purposes.

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