

Opioids & Synthetic Cannabis

Drug advocates in Pennsylvania try to argue that by commercializing marijuana, the use of synthetic cannabis and other natural opioids would decrease. But the international evidence squashes those hopes.

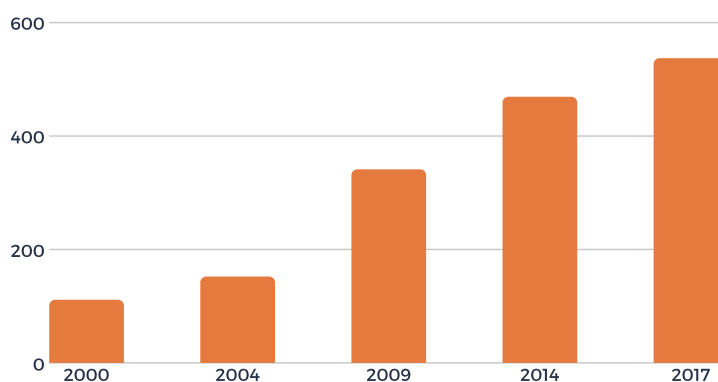
Research is revealing that individual marijuana users are at much higher risk for developing opioid use disorders, and that population studies claiming a correlation between state marijuana legalization and reduced opioid deaths have serious deficiencies. Better studies are now showing marijuana is a risk factor in the increased non-medical use of opioids.

Four out of ten individuals with lifetime marijuana use progressed to other illicit drug use at some time in their lives. (*International Journal on Drug Policy*)

An American study published in September 2017 of over 30,000 Americans showed that participants who reported marijuana use in the previous year were **2.6 times more likely** to abuse prescription opioids: "Cannabis use appears to increase rather than decrease the risk of developing nonmedical prescription opioid use and opioid use disorder." (*American Journal of Psychiatry*)

The CDC even shares evidence that marijuana users are **3 times more likely** to become addicted to heroin. (*July 7, 2015*)

Opioid deaths have **increased**, not decreased, since Colorado legalized marijuana, first for medical use, then recreational. Deaths per year are **5 times greater** since 2000.



Source: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

“The opioid crisis appears to be worsening where marijuana has been legalized.” - *JAMA Internal Medicine Journal*

The dangers of opioid use is even greater for teens using marijuana:

- Marijuana is already the most commonly co-ingested substance with prescription opioids. (Monitoring the Future)
- Early marijuana use more than doubles the likelihood of opioid use later in life. (2015 study – International Journal on Drug Policy)
- In 2017, researchers examined data from 17,000 youth aged 12-17 and found that youth with past-month marijuana use were **ten times more likely to report past-month use of other illicit drugs.** (National Survey on Drug Use and Health)

Pennsylvania already has an addiction epidemic with synthetic cannabis and methamphetamine. The reality is that the desire to get ‘high’ overrides any consideration of the legality of the drug or its risk. It seems fairly logical that we should not be encouraging marijuana use if our goal is to stop addiction.