Cannabis Use and Self-Reported Difficulties Concentrating, Remembering, or Making Decisions Among Adults 50 and Over
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Background
- Marijuana, or cannabis, is the most commonly used illicit drug in the U.S.
- Use is growing in the older adult population.1
- Between 2015 and 2018, there was a 75% relative increase in cannabis use—from 2.4% to 4.2%—among adults 65+ (P<0.001)2
- Cannabis is known to impair learning, memory, attention, concentration, and abstract reasoning3
- Little is known about these effects on older adults4

Objective
To investigate the relationship between self-reported past-month cannabis use and serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition among adults age 50 years and older.

Data Source:
- 2016-2019 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)

Sample (N = 294,000):
- Respondents 50 years and older
- Past-month cannabis use and difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decision because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition variables
- 20 U.S. states and 2 territories

Methods
- Additive multiple logistic regression
- Controlled for age, gender, education, race, income, marital status, employment status, health status, depression, diabetes, and tobacco and heavy alcohol use.

Results
- Respondents who reported past-month cannabis use were 1.423 times more likely to have difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition than nonusers, controlling for other characteristics.
- Those with depression were 5.661 times more likely to experience difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, controlling for other characteristics.
- Reporting good/better general health, being employed, graduating from college or technical school, and having an annual income of $50,000 or more was associated with lower adjusted odds ratios of having difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, controlling for other characteristics.

Conclusions
- Understanding the relationship between reported past-month cannabis use and concentration, memory, and decision-making because of a physical condition is vital to public health.
- Older adults who have difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition are likely to have unmet health needs, reduced access to care, and poor health outcomes5
- Our results are consistent with a prior study that found that self-report cognition worsened in former and current cannabis users over 50 years old.6
- This study makes an important contribution to what is known about cannabis use and its potential adverse effects on older adults.
- Findings are important to patients, clinicians, and policymakers as they contemplate decisions about older adults’ cannabis use.

Reference List