

# Cannabis Use: Signal of Increasing Risk of Serious Cardiovascular Disorders

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**Background**—Cannabis is known to be associated with neuropsychiatric problems, but less is known about complications affecting other specified body systems. We report and analyze 35 recent remarkable cardiovascular complications following cannabis use.

**Methods and Results**—In France, serious cases of abuse and dependence in response to the use of psychoactive substances must be reported to the national system of the French Addictovigilance Network. We identified all spontaneous reports of cardiovascular complications related to cannabis use collected by the French Addictovigilance Network from 2006 to 2010. We described the clinical characteristics of these cases and their evolution: 1.8% of all cannabis-related reports (35/1979) were cardiovascular complications, with patients being mostly men (85.7%) and of an average age of 34.3 years. There were 22 cardiac complications (20 acute coronary syndromes), 10 peripheral complications (lower limb or juvenile arteriopathies and Buerger-like diseases), and 3 cerebral complications (acute cerebral angiopathy, transient cortical blindness, and spasm of cerebral artery). In 9 cases, the event led to patient death.

**Conclusions**—Increased reporting of cardiovascular complications related to cannabis and their extreme seriousness (with a death rate of 25.6%) indicate cannabis as a possible risk factor for cardiovascular disease in young adults, in line with previous findings. Given that cannabis is perceived to be harmless by the general public and that legalization of its use is debated, data concerning its danger must be widely disseminated. Practitioners should be aware that cannabis may be a potential triggering factor for cardiovascular complications in young people. (*J Am Heart Assoc.* 2014;3:e000638 doi: 10.1161/JAHA.113.000638)

**Key Words:** acute coronary syndrome • pharmacodependence • drug abuse • stroke • vascular complications • young

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An accompanying Table S1 is available at <http://jaha.ahajournals.org/content/3/2/e000638/suppl/DC1>

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Received November 18, 2013; accepted February 2, 2014.

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Cardiovascular diseases remain the most frequent cause of global death worldwide, and the most common is coronary artery disease, with a mortality rate of 12.8% in 2011.<sup>1</sup> Acute coronary syndromes significantly contribute to the burden of cardiovascular disease.<sup>2</sup> Reduction of cardiovascular diseases is therefore a key concern in Western countries. In the United States, the American Heart Association aims to improve the cardiovascular health of all Americans by 20% while reducing deaths from cardiovascular diseases and stroke by 20% by 2020.<sup>3</sup> In Europe, the Systematic COronary Risk Evaluation (SCORE) system was developed to provide a risk-scoring system for the management of cardiovascular risk in clinical practice.<sup>4</sup> The frequency of cardiovascular diseases varies among countries related to geographic differences<sup>1,5</sup> and according to the generally acknowledged risk factors for cardiovascular diseases, the knowledge of which cannot be disassociated from efficient understanding, prevention, and management of cardiovascular diseases. Among these risk factors are obesity (and also, weight changes and sedentary lifestyle), age, metabolic factors such as elevated cholesterol levels, and tobacco

smoking.<sup>2,6,7</sup> Another possible risk factor is cannabis smoking, which has recently been added to the list of the potential triggers for myocardial infarction.<sup>8</sup> In addition, it was the substance, after tobacco and cocaine, most often identified as being involved in ischemic stroke associated with drugs with abuse potential.<sup>9</sup>

Yet, cannabis is the world's most widely used illicit substance.<sup>10</sup> It benefits from an image of safety for health, and its use has become trivialized. Communication about the potential therapeutic properties of cannabinoids and the marketing of cannabis derivatives in the treatment of pain, nausea, or anorexia in several countries must have contributed to reinforcing the belief that cannabis use could be safe or even healthy.<sup>11</sup> However, it is now acknowledged that cannabis use is harmful to health.<sup>12–16</sup> Although factors such as variety of plant, administration route, concomitant tobacco use, or possible adulterated products may complicate the identification of potential cannabis-related disorders,<sup>17,18</sup> it was suggested that cannabis and tobacco together precipitated the occurrence of coronary syndromes in patients with coronary history compared with tobacco taken alone.<sup>19</sup> Another study conducted in a population of nearly 4000 patients hospitalized for acute myocardial infarction suggested that cannabis use acutely increased the risk of myocardial infarction.<sup>20</sup> More recently, similar serious cardiovascular complications were identified as the reason for hospitalization of young cannabis users.<sup>21</sup> They emerged among all other subgroups of complications because the seriousness of cases and the particular profile of patients, principally of young and apparently healthy (apparently because they had no history) males. Among the events collected, myocardial infarctions, thromboses, and cerebral strokes were observed.

The French Addictovigilance Network involves 13 regional Addictovigilance centers, the Centres d'Évaluation et d'Information sur la Pharmacodépendance–Addictovigilance. The centers were created in the early 1990s with the aim of achieving reliable surveillance of abuse and pharmacodependence cases related to drugs of abuse—plants and medical or illicit drugs with psychoactive properties.<sup>22</sup> The network evaluates the impact of abuse and dependence of drugs on public health and thus contributes to prevention and harm reduction policies and to regulation and control in the area of abuse or dependence. Some remarkable cases of cannabis-related cardiovascular disorders have been reported to French Addictovigilance Network in the recent years. To confirm whether there is a signal of increasing risk of cardiovascular complications related to cannabis use in France, we investigated all cases reported to the French national system of addictovigilance from 2006 to 2010. The aim of this work was to describe all cases of cannabis-related cardiovascular complications and to estimate at the

national level if there is a signal of increasing risk of these events.

## Methods

In France, the addictovigilance system relies on the spontaneous reporting of serious abuse and dependence cases related to psychoactive drug use.<sup>22</sup> Health professionals have the legal obligation to report to their regional addictovigilance center all serious cases defined as one of the following criteria of seriousness: leading to temporary or permanent functional incapacity or disability, to inpatient hospitalization or prolongation of existing hospitalization, to congenital anomalies, or to an immediate vital risk or death.<sup>23,24</sup> These spontaneous reports related to drugs of abuse are recorded in a common database. Thus, the study was performed on anonymous routinely collected data and therefore, according to French regulation, did not require approval by a regulatory structure or an ethics committee.

The French Addictovigilance Network was requested to search cases of cannabis-related cardiovascular complications during the past 5 years (2006 to 2010), to cover the time when several outstanding cases of cannabis-related cardiovascular disorders had been reported to the network as well as the few preceding years. There was no restriction in the types of complications to include, because the study aimed to exhaustively assess and identify all potential cardiovascular outcomes in relation with cannabis use, including those with no obvious relation. To be included, cases had to be sufficiently documented with outcome chronology and diagnosis clearly stated. Cases could be included even if data such as management of patients or toxicologic analysis information were lacking.

Cases were described according to the type of complication, patient sex and age, cardiovascular history, and magnitude of cannabis exposure. Quantitative variable (age) was described by mean and interquartiles, and categorical variables were described using effective and percentages. All complications occurred in the context of cannabis use: last cannabis intake must not be confused with cannabis exposure. The latter was categorized into “actual,” “recent,” and “regular and daily” uses, respectively defined as (1) 1 or more uses in the past 12 months, (2) between 1 and 9 uses in the past 30 days, and (3) 10 or more uses in the past 30 days.<sup>25</sup> Cases for which exposure was not stated were considered as actual; that is, last use was considered the only use in the previous 12 months.

Concomitant use of other psychoactive substances was also taken into account if available and reported in the medical records or when investigated in toxicologic analyses.

**Table 1.** Number of Spontaneous Reports to the French Addictovigilance Network: Cannabis-Related Reports and Cardiovascular Cannabis-Related Reports From 2006 to 2010

Year	Total Number of Reports (for All Drugs)		Total Number of Cannabis-Related Reports		Number of Cardiovascular Cannabis-Related Reports
	N	%	n	%	n
2006	1858	0.3%	468	1.1%	5
2007	2005	0.2%	452	1.1%	5
2008	2188	0.3%	415	1.4%	6
2009	1926	0.4%	335	2.4%	8
2010	1959	0.6%	309	3.6%	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>9936</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>1979</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>35</b>

## Results

During the 2006 to 2010 period, 1979 spontaneous reports related to cannabis were reported to the addictovigilance network, of which 35 corresponded to cardiovascular complications (Table 1). The percentage of cannabis-related cardiovascular complications increased from 1.1% in 2006 to 3.6% in 2010 of all cannabis-related reports.

### Characteristics of Subjects With Cardiovascular Complications

Patients were mostly men (30/35) (Table 2), and the mean age was 34.3 years old (SD 8.8 years). Details of each case are presented in Table S1.

Details on cardiovascular history and risk factors could be found for 46% of cases (16/35): 9 subjects had personal and 7 had familial cardiovascular history. They are all presented in Table S1.

Personal cardiovascular history consisted of high blood pressure (n=2), acute coronary syndrome (n=2), and atherogenic hypercholesterolemia (n=1) in patients with cardiac complications and of Raynaud disease (n=3), intermittent claudication (n=2), high blood pressure (n=1), deep vein thrombosis (n=1), and acute coronary syndrome (n=1) in patients with extracardiac complications. Familial history of coronary (n=4) or vascular (n=2) diseases or cerebral stroke (n=1) was documented. Twenty-one patients (60%) were identified as concomitant tobacco smokers, of whom 6 had personal cardiovascular history. Details about these preexisting cardiovascular risk factors are presented in Table S1. Body mass index could be assessed in only 31% (11/35) of the patients. Among these patients, all of whom belonged to the “acute coronary syndrome” group, 6 (54%, 6/11) were in the normal healthy weight category, 4 (36%) were overweight, and 1 was in the first obese class (body mass index=32.1 kg/m<sup>2</sup>).

Cannabis exposure was actual, recent, and regular or daily in 8, 6, and 16 patients, respectively. Duration of use, available in 5 cases only, varied from 2 to more than 25 years.

Toxicologic analyses were performed in 13 cases (Table S1).  $\Delta^9$ -tetra-Hydrocannabinol (THC) was detected in each. In 10 cases, THC was the only substance found for which the patient was positive. In 2 cases, THC and alcohol were found together but autopsy report dismissed alcohol in 1 of these cases, explaining this was most probably the result of post-mortem gastric fermentation. In 1 case, THC was associated with alcohol, opiates, morphine, salicylates, and phenothiazine. Among the 22 patients with no available toxicology data, cannabis was the only product mentioned in the medical file (n=3) or the following substances were quoted: tobacco and alcohol (alone: n=12 and 1, respectively; together: n=3); polydrug use (ie, Lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), ecstasy, alcohol, and cocaine), and benzodiazepines, opiates, and cocaine (n=1, respectively).

### Characteristics of Complications

Cases were discriminated based on cardiac<sup>22</sup> and extracardiac<sup>13</sup> complications (Table 2). Cardiac complications composed 20 cases of acute coronary syndromes and 2 heart rate disorders (Table S1). Extracardiac complications affected cerebral arteries with cases of “acute cerebral angiopathy,” “transient cortical blindness,” and “spasm of cerebral artery” (n=1, respectively), or consisted in lower limb or juvenile arteriopathies (n=4) and in Buerger-like diseases (n=6).

Patient management were heterogeneously described (Table 2). There were 18 hospitalizations, half of which were related to acute coronary syndrome (10/18), with a mean duration of 15 days (versus 7 days for hospitalizations in patients with peripheral or cerebral complications). As presented in Table S1, biology screening (12), electrocardiography (7), or medical imaging (arteriography 12 cases [cardiac echography 7, radiography 5], magnetic resonance

**Table 2.** Characteristics of Spontaneous Reports of Cannabis-Related Cardiovascular Complications (2006–2010)

Characteristics	Total	Cardiac		Cerebral	Peripheral
		ACS	HRD		
N	35	20	2	3	10
Age (mean±SD)	34.3±8.8	35.5±9.0	32.5±13.4	25.3±3.1	35.2±8.0
Male	30	20	1	2	7
Exposure (A/R/D)	13/6/16	10/2/8	2/0/0	0/0/3	1/4/5
Cardiovascular history	9	4	0	0	5
Associated substances (as quoted in medical file)	24	12	1	2	9
Tobacco/alcohol	21/6	11/2	0/0	2/2	8/2
None declared	11	9	1	0	1
Cocaine	1	1	0	0	0
Benzodiazepine	1	0	1	0	0
Ecstasy	1	0	0	0	1
Lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD)	1	0	0	0	1
Management	26	13	1	3	9
Hospitalization, n (mean duration in days)	18 (15)	10 (20)	0 (0)	3 (2)	5 (9)
Invasive techniques	12	8	0	0	4
Noninvasive techniques	20	11	0	3	6
Evolution	18	9	0	2	7
Improvement	3	1	0	1	1
Worsening	9	4	0	0	5
Death	9	8	1	0	0

ACS indicates acute coronary syndrome; HRD, heart rate disorder; A, actual ( $\geq 1$  use during the past 12 months); D, regular and daily ( $\geq 10$  uses during the past 30 days); R, recent ( $\geq 1$  use during the past 30 days).

imaging [MRI] 3 [CT scan 2, Doppler echography 2]) was performed. Cardiac resuscitation attempts were mentioned in 6 patients with acute coronary syndrome, of which 2 underwent thrombolysis. Invasive techniques were used in 12 cases (8 angioplasties, 6 cardiac stent placements, 3 coronary bypasses and 1 transmetatarsal amputation). None of the 9 deaths occurred in hospitalized patients, but all had cardiac complications.

## Discussion

During the 2006–2010 period, the proportion of cardiovascular complications rose from 1.1% to 3.6% of all cannabis-related disorders reported to the French Addictovigilance Network. They were all serious and included cardiac and extracardiac complications, mainly acute coronary syndromes and peripheral arteriopathies. In comparison to the most recently assessed number of regular cannabis users in France (1.2 million), only a small proportion of complications was reported to the French addictovigilance system.

Our results may reasonably be considered a biased (underestimated) representation because the main limitation of this system is the underreporting, although the reporting of all serious cases related to drug abuse and dependence is compulsory and regulated in the French Public Health Code.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, currently, the reporting rate of adverse drug reactions is estimated to be 5% in the field of pharmacovigilance.<sup>26</sup> In other words, 95% of cases are usually not captured. Consequently, the number of cardiovascular complications in cannabis users should be much higher than we describe, especially that this rate should even be lowered in the field of addictovigilance because adverse reactions related to drugs of abuse (of which cannabis) are less frequently reported than those related to other medicines and was recently estimated to be 0.4%.<sup>27</sup> We considered that these cases were too few to be extrapolated by applying the reporting rate, although it would have definitely provided a more accurate estimation.

However, despite poor exhaustiveness, it has already been shown that the spontaneous reporting (as, for example, in the field of pharmacovigilance) is the cornerstone to identify signals. In the context of our study, the increasing reporting of

cardiovascular complications related to cannabis, and their extreme seriousness (with a death rate of 25.6%) could indicate cannabis as a possible risk factor for cardiovascular disease in young adults, in line with previous findings.<sup>8</sup>

Another possible explanation for the small number of cases is that cardiovascular disorders may hardly be connected to cannabis considering the lack of evidence-based data in this area and especially because cannabis-related disorders are frequently restricted to neuropsychiatric impairments. For instance, in a recent clinical review oriented to general practice in primary care that gives advice in the management of cannabis-related disorders, the cardiovascular system is not even mentioned.<sup>28</sup>

On the other hand, our work is somehow limited by the poor information available. Indeed, some cases were not exhaustively informed, and events were too few to assess whether the cardiovascular events were actually due to the cannabis use rather than some other risk factors using statistical modeling. Toxicologic analyses were provided or available in only 37% of cases (13/35). More information about toxicology should have revealed odd associations of products among cases. In most of the available toxicologic analyses, which were mainly in forensic reports for unexplained deaths, cannabis was the only positive substance among all substances. History of cardiac or vascular disease and risk factors were not systematically available but were found in 46% (16/35) of patients. In particular, body mass index was assessed in only 31%. According to previous findings, cannabis use might be harmless to most young healthy users, whereas patients with preexisting cardiovascular weaknesses appear to be prone to the harmful effects of cannabis.<sup>29</sup> In our study, patients presented with these events with varied histories and ages (25% were younger than 28.3 years, median age 34.5 years, interquartile range 28.3 to 39 years).

A report of adverse cardiovascular, cerebrovascular, and peripheral vascular effects of marijuana inhalation was published recently.<sup>30</sup> The serious adverse events are very similar to those of the present study and include myocardial infarction, sudden cardiac death, cardiomyopathy, stroke, transient ischemic attack, and cannabis arteritis. A population-based study conducted in the area of preventive cardiology emphasized a strong association with unhealthy behaviors such as high caloric intake, tobacco smoking, and use of other illicit drugs, although it did not reveal any independent association between cannabis use and the occurrence of cardiovascular risk factors in young adults.<sup>31</sup> Case reports of acute coronary syndromes have long been noted and remain numerous,<sup>31–35</sup> and there are reports in the literature of myocardial infarction in adolescents who had used the synthetic cannabinoid K2, the effects of which being reported as cannabis-like after smoking.<sup>32</sup> Cases of cannabis-related limb ischemia possibly resulting in necrosis of the fingers or toes have also been reported.<sup>14,33</sup> In 2010, 70

case reports of cannabis arteritis were reported in the literature.<sup>34</sup> In this 201- review, the patients were younger than our group of patients with peripheral arteriopathy, with a mean age of 28.5 years. However, patients with Buerger disease might be older, with an estimated mean age at onset of 35.0 years.<sup>35</sup>

In addition, a recent study on hospitalizations linked to cannabis in a university hospital has shown a non-negligible proportion of cardiovascular complications, with 6.3% of all cannabis-related hospitalizations.<sup>21</sup> Among these cases, only a few were reported to the regional addictovigilance center. Therefore, a large underestimation of the cases described in the present study can be expected, especially because the reporting is low, estimated to be 0.4%.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, we are not certain that all areas were extensively and exhaustively covered in this study. Also, clinicians do not easily attribute these complications to cannabis, unless cannabis is the only product involved.

The 35 cases described must be compared with the 1.2 million regular users in France,<sup>36</sup> and to the incidence rates of cardiovascular complications in a comparable group. Yet, relevant comparable group is difficult to define because in the general population, patients with cardiovascular complications are much older than the patients in our study. Even in the event that rates of cardiovascular complications were available in the young, cannabis users would remain indistinguishable from nonusers. However, sudden unexpected cardiac death in persons younger than 35 years was assessed in Denmark from 2000 to 2006.<sup>37</sup> Many unexpected deaths remained unexplained (29%), which could result from a non-negligible part of death in relation with drug uses, including cannabis, the most prevalent illicit drug worldwide,<sup>10</sup> although only 9% of death with available toxicologic results had positive test for cannabinoids. In France, existing registries on coronary heart disease target only the 35- to 74-year-old population and exclude potential associated risk factors such as drug use history.<sup>38</sup> Between 2004 and 2007, average incidence rates of myocardial infarction and coronary deaths in patients aged 35 to 44 years were estimated to be 57 of 100 000 among men and 13 of 100 000 among women; however, these data are hardly transferable to that of our study. Besides, the national *Décès en Relation Avec l'abus de Médicaments et de Substances* (DRAMES) study, which identifies and surveys deaths in relation to abuse, misuse, dependence, or accidental intake of psychoactive drugs, emphasized in 2011 a fair number (n=7) of cannabis-positive analyses in deaths by unexplained cardiac arrest.<sup>39</sup> This constitutes another signal in favor of the growing set of evidence on the possible involvement of cannabis in cardiovascular outcomes. In addition, the prevalence of cannabis use is high in Europe with 14.9% of young European (15 to 24 years old) using cannabis in the actual year, and

particularly in France, the third European country after the Czech Republic and Spain.<sup>40</sup>

Under pathologic conditions (eg, imbalance of the endocannabinoid system), cannabinoids have been associated with cardiovascular dysfunctions.<sup>41</sup> Thus, long-term use of cannabis should be responsible for long-lasting decreased blood pressure, heart rate and cardiac contractility; increased blood volume; and diminished circulatory responses to exercise: more generally, it is associated with decreased myocardial function. Moreover, because of these long- and short-term complications, heart function is carefully controlled in subjects who take part in experimental studies with cannabis administration.<sup>42</sup> These are consistent with centrally mediated, reduced sympathetic and enhanced parasympathetic activity.<sup>43</sup> The opposite can be observed in pathologic cardiovascular conditions: in animals, THC was shown to be responsible for vasoconstriction. Now, vasospasm could be a possible common origin for many of the cases we describe in the present study. Also, the direct impact of cannabinoids on factors such as nitric oxide or endothelial factors could explain the disparity of complications observed between cannabis and tobacco.<sup>44</sup> The latter is associated with deregulations observed after continuous exposition, which contrasts with the apparent immediacy of cannabis-related cardiovascular disorders.

Such complications can be seen among young adults who use stimulant drugs (ie, cocaine, methamphetamine) that are known to be responsible for cardiovascular complications.<sup>9,45</sup> These stimulant drug users are likely to also be regular cannabis users.<sup>46,47</sup> Stimulant drug use may be less likely acknowledged than cannabis use for societal reasons, but that is not sufficient to exclude cannabis from being possibly linked to such outcomes. Our findings indicate that cannabis intoxication should be more systematically investigated in the medical management of cardiovascular complications observed in young adults. They lead us to recommend systematic investigation for cannabis use, through oral interviewing and urinary analysis, as also advocated by Wolff and colleagues.<sup>48</sup>

## Conclusion

Several striking cardiovascular complications following cannabis use raised the issue of the possible implication of cannabis in cardiovascular outcomes and the necessary national review. Despite the known underreporting, the rate of cannabis-related cardiovascular complications reported steadily rose during the past 5 years. Cardiovascular disorders represented 2% of the reports related to cannabis, classified into cardiac, cerebral, and peripheral complications. The majority consisted of acute coronary syndromes and

peripheral arteriopathies. This result is consistent with previous findings and strengthens the idea that cannabis may be responsible for serious complications, in particular on the cardiovascular system. Among the difficulties in identifying these cases are the causality assessment when differential diagnoses coexist, and the raising but still poor awareness of health professionals toward this particular type of effects. Cannabis may trigger cardiovascular complications and therefore should be regarded as so by health practitioners and by users, who often admit the danger of drugs like cocaine or amphetamines but minimize that of cannabis. A prospective study with collection of all cardiovascular cases at hospital admission should complete the present findings, which add to the existing knowledge in the field of cannabis complications and must be considered as the starting point for further research.

## Acknowledgments

The authors thank the members of the French Addictovigilance Network Working Group on Cannabis Disorders for their meaningful contribution to this collaborative work: Amelie Daveluy (Bordeaux), Reynald Le Boisselier (Caen), Nicolas Authier (Clermont-Ferrand), Claude-Elisabeth Barjhoux (Grenoble), Sylvie Deheul (Lille), Alexandra Boucher (Lyon), Michel Spadari (Marseille), Celine Eiden (Montpellier), Valerie Gibaja (Nancy), Marie Gerardin (Nantes), Samira Djezzar (Paris), and François Chavant (Poitiers).

## Sources of Funding

Financial support was provided by the French InterMinisterial Mission for the Fight Against Drugs and Addiction (MILDT, Mission interministérielle de lutte contre les drogues et toxicomanies), and by the French drug agency (ANSM, Agence Nationale de Sécurité des Médicaments).

## Disclosures

None of the authors has a conflict of interest to declare. This work was part of Emilie Jouanjus' study toward a PhD degree at Toulouse University.

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## Supplemental material

Details of the spontaneous reports of cannabis-related cardiovascular complications

Year	Age	Gender	Case description	Exposure: Duration of use (years)	Associated substances (as quoted in medical file)	Cardiovascular history*	Hospitalisation: duration (days)	Management	Evolution	Toxicology* (+: found positive, -: found negative)
2006	34	male	Found dead on the public highway. Autopsy concluded in a death caused by a probable cannabis-related acute coronary syndrome since cannabis was found positive.	Recent	Cannabis only	na	No	Cardiac resuscitation attempts	Death	THC+ Alcohol- Pain killers- Anticonvulsant- Anxiolytic- Hypnotic- Antidepressant- Neuroleptic- Amphetamines- Cocaine- Opiates-
2006	44	male	Toe amputation complicated by impossible healing and followed by transtibial amputation in the context of Buerger's disease.	Daily	Tobacco	High blood pressure, Acute coronary syndrome, arteriopathy	Yes	Angioplasty coupled to cardiac stent placement, amputation	Worsening	THC+ Alcohol- Benzodiazepines- Amphetamines- Cocaine- Opiates-
2006	28	male	Daily user of cannabis sustained acute coronary syndrome during exercise (low-speed walking).	Daily	Tobacco	Young sister had cerebrovascular accident	Yes: 7d	Angioplasty coupled to cardiac stent placement, arteriography, biology screening, electrocardiogram, echography, radiography	na	na
2006	35	male	Acute coronary syndrome in the context of alcohol and cannabis intoxications. Patient had a history of tabagism (1 pack/day) and his father had died from acute coronary syndrome at the age of 65.	Actual	Alcohol Tobacco	Father died at 65 from coronary heart disease. BMI=20.5	Yes: 1d	Arteriography, biology, electrocardiogram	Worsening	na
2006	36	female	Diagnosis of Buerger's disease with inaugural rheumatological manifestations. Patient had tabagism (10 packs-year) and a 2-year history of daily cannabis use (2/day).	Daily: 2y	Tobacco	na	Yes: 4d	Arteriography, echodoppler, echocardiography, radiography	na	na



2007	49	male	Acute coronary syndrome. Patient described a threatening syndrome with several episodes of 10 minute-long angina pain that had occurred in the previous days. Oddly enough, these episodes had all been preceded by cannabis use, 30 minutes earlier. He was a heavy tobacco smoker with a 60 packs-year history.	Actual	Tobacco	BMI=24.2	Yes: 8d	Angioplasty coupled to cardiac stent placement, arteriography, biology screening, electrocardiogram, echography	na	na
2007	24	male	Cardiorespiratory arrest arisen 6 hours after cannabis intoxication.	Regular	Tobacco	Sudden cardiac death of great-grandfather at the age of 59. BMI= 25.4	Yes: 90d	Angioplasty, arteriography, electrocardiogram, cardiac resuscitation attempts, thrombolysis	Worsening	na
2007	39	male	A 39-year-old male presented acute coronary syndrome. He was a regular cannabis and tobacco (20 packs-year) user. He had no medicosurgical history.	Regular	Tobacco	BMI=22.4	Yes: 3d	Arteriography, angioplasty coupled to cardiac stent placement, biology screening, electrocardiogram, radiography	na	na
2007	36	male	Acute coronary syndrome in overweighted patient with dyslipemia and a more than 40 packs-year tabagism. Cannabis was found positive in toxicology.	Recent	Tobacco	Father died at 45 from coronary heart disease. BMI=24.8	Yes: 6d	Angioplasty coupled to cardiac stent placement, arteriography, biology screening, echography	Worsening	THC+
2007	29	male	Acute coronary syndrome after cannabis intake, which the patient had not used for a long time. Patient had been awakened 1 hour after use by an anginous-like pain. He was overweighted, used 1 pack of tobacco cigarettes per day and cannabis occasionally.	Actual	Tobacco	BMI=32.1	Yes: 10d	Angioplasty, arteriography, biology screening, electrocardiogram, echography, radiography, resuscitation attempts, thrombolysis	Worsening	na
2008	30	male	-	Actual	Cannabis only	na	na	na	Death	na
2008	36	male	-	Actual	Cannabis only	na	na	na	Death	na
2008	29	male	Acute coronary syndrome in a male who used between 15 and 20 joints a day and cocaine occasionally.	Daily	Cocaine	Father died at 35 from coronary heart disease. BMI=24.3	Yes	Angioplasty coupled to cardiac stent placement.	Worsening	na

2008	43	male	Diagnosis of Buerger's disease after the patient was admitted for wounds of the toe which did not seem to heal over. He had first been taken care of for intermittent claudication. Then, a surgery of the foot had been complicated by superinfection and has probably made the original point for the long-lasting wounds.	Daily: 15y	Alcohol	Intermittent claudication, Raynaud's disease	na	Arteriography, echodoppler, radiography	na	na
2008	27	male	-	Regular	Cannabis only	na	na	Angioplasty and circulatory assistance	na	THC+
2008	38	male	Atypical arteriopathy which has remained evolving although it treated. Patient smoked 1 pack of tobacco cigarettes and used several cannabis joints every day; he did not use alcohol. Neither initially traumatic nor toxic (drugs) origin could be found except from heavy tobacco and cannabis use. The pathology he suffered from was not a typical Buerger's disease and led to toe amputations. Although made aware of the risks, the patient had carried on with its uses.	Daily	Tobacco	na	Yes	Arteriography	Worsening	na
2009	37	male	-	Daily: >25y	Alcohol Tobacco Adulteration product	na	Yes	na	na	THC+ Opiates+ Morphine+ Alcohol+ Salicylate+ Phenothiazine+
2009	26	male	Transient cortical blindness and spotty amnesia in the context of acute cannabis and alcohol intoxication. Patient had neither known cardiovascular history nor risk factors except from regular tobacco and cannabis use.	Regular	Alcohol Tobacco	na	Yes: 2d	Biology, MRI scanner, radiography	Recovery	THC+ Alcohol+ Opiates- Amphetamines- Cocaine-
2009	46	male	Death after collapse on the public highway with failure in the cardiac resuscitation attempts in subject with no known cardiovascular history. Toxicology was positive for paracetamol at therapeutic dosage and for cannabinoids at a dose	Actual	Cannabis only	Myocardial infarct scar. BMI=25.5	No	Cardiac resuscitation attempts	Death	THC+

			compatible with recent intoxication.							
2009	31	male	Death after collapse at home with failure in resuscitation attempts in subject with no known cardiovascular history but who had felt tired the days preceding death. Toxicology was positive for paracetamol (traces) and for cannabinoids at a dose compatible with recent intoxication.	Actual	Cannabis only	BMI=26.7	No	Cardiac resuscitation attempts	Death	THC+
2009	45	male	Found dead lying on bed in subject with neither known cardiovascular history nor medical treatment. Cannabinoids were the only toxics found positive.	Actual	Cannabis only	BMI=22.2	No	na	Death	THC+
2009	35	male	Juvenile arteriopathy within the framework of aortic thrombosis. Patient was a heavy cannabis user smoking 2 joints a day during week days and a mean of 40 joints during week-ends. He was also tobacco smoker (11 packs-year), alcohol drinker and other drug (cocaine, ecstasy, LSD, psilocybe) user. Appropriate treatment enabled clear improvement although intermittent claudication remained.	Daily: 19y	Alcohol Tobacco Ecstasy LSD Psilocybe	Father had several ischemic episodes before the age of 55	na	Cardiac bypass	Worsening	na
2009	34	female	Patient with a history of acute coronary syndrome, tobacco and cannabis user, and under oral contraception was diagnosed a juvenile arteriopathy. She used cannabis and tobacco since she was 17 and 18, respectively, and had started reducing these uses after her cardiac episode.	Recent: 17y	Tobacco	Deep veinous thrombosis: personal and familial (brother, mother, grandmother) history. Acute coronary syndrome. Intermittent claudication.	Yes	Arteriography, biology screening, echography	na	na

2009	39	male	Diagnosis of arteriopathy in a cannabis and tobacco user since the age of 12. Patient presented necrotic wounds of the toes and inflammatory reaction of the foot and lower limb. Diagnosis was in favour of a Buerger's disease.	Recent	Tobacco	na	na	na	na	na
2010	17	male	Arteriopathy diagnosed after the patient had presented ulcerations of the upper limb, which appeared as soon as he started to use cannabis. Symptoms started to regress when patient interrupted the use.	Actual	Cannabis only	Cutis marmorata telangiectatica congenita (CMTC), Raynaud's disease	na	Arteriography, biology screening	Recovery	na
2010	na	na	Symptomatic lower limb arteriopathy found in a cannabis using patient who had resumed tobacco and cannabis consumption for 4 months.	Recent	Tobacco	na	Yes	Thromboendarterectomy	na	na
2010	23	male	Spontaneous retrosternal pain which onsetted 20 minutes after cannabis and alcohol intoxication in patient with high blood pressure.	Regular	Alcohol Tobacco	High blood pressure	na	na	na	na
2010	42	male	Death after collapse and failure in cardiac resuscitation attempts. Chronic exposure to cannabis was pointed out as a possible cause for onset of preexisting cardiac pathology and even involved in the determinism of death.	Actual	Cannabis only	na	na	Cardiac resuscitation attempts	Death	THC+ Alcohol- Pain killers- Anticonvulsant- Anxiolytic- Hypnotic-Tricyclic antidepressant- Neuroleptic- Lithium- Amphetamines- Cocaine- Opiates- Ketamine-
2010	28	male	Acute cerebral angiopathy after several repeated episodes of cephalalgia. Patient had no cardiovascular history but was a heavy cannabis user (5 joints a day). He had used cocaine one month earlier.	Daily	Cannabis only	na	Yes	Biology, MRI scanner	Recovery	THC+ Opiates - Cocaine - Amphetamines - Methadone - Barbituriques - Benzodiazepines - Alcohol- Tricyclic antidepressant -
2010	29	male	Acute coronary syndrome on sound coronary arteries. Patient had neither known cardiovascular history nor risk factor but was a regular cannabis user and had used up to 1 to 2 cannabis joints a day since he was 18. Symptoms first appeared 8 hours after the use of cannabis he had bought in	Regular	Tobacco	na	Yes	Arteriography, biology, electrocardiogram, echography	na	Done but results not available

			the street.							
2010	22	female	Pounding headache episodes attributed to a spasm of cerebral artery. Patient was tobacco smoker, regular cannabis user and occasional alcohol drinker.	Regular	Alcohol Tobacco	na	Yes	MRI	na	na
2010	31	male	Stage IV lower limb arteriopathy. Patient had history of tabagism and cannabis use and of Buerger's disease.	Recent	Tobacco	Buerger's disease	Yes: 15d	Cardiac bypass	Worsening	na
2010	45	male	Found dead on couch. He had a history of untreated high blood presure and atherogenous hypercholesterolemia, was a tobacco smoker and under the influence of cannabis. Death was caused by acute coronary syndrome and occured in the context of cannabis intake.	Actual	Tobacco	High blood presure and atherogenous hypercholesterol emia. BMI=27.4	No	na	Death	THC+
2010	57	male	Found dead lying on the ground at home. He did not have any cardiovascular history. Toxicology was positive for cannabinoids only.	Actual	Cannabis only	Myocardial infarct scar	No	na	Death	THC+
2010	23	female	-	Actual	Benzodiazepine	na	na	na	na	na

\*BMI: Body mass index, THC: Tetrahydrocannabinol



## **Cannabis Use: Signal of Increasing Risk of Serious Cardiovascular Disorders**

Emilie Jouanjus, Maryse Lapeyre-Mestre, Joelle Micallef and The French Association of the Regional Abuse and Dependence Monitoring Centres (CEIP-A) Working Group on Cannabis Complications\*

*J Am Heart Assoc.* 2014;3:e000638; originally published April 23, 2014;

doi: 10.1161/JAHA.113.000638

The *Journal of the American Heart Association* is published by the American Heart Association, 7272 Greenville Avenue, Dallas, TX 75231  
Online ISSN: 2047-9980

The online version of this article, along with updated information and services, is located on the World Wide Web at:

<http://jaha.ahajournals.org/content/3/2/e000638>

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## Supplemental material

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Year	Age	Gender	Case description	Exposure: Duration of use (years)	Associated substances (as quoted in medical file)	Cardiovascular history*	Hospitalisation: duration (days)	Management	Evolution	Toxicology* (+: found positive, -: found negative)
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2006	35	male	Acute coronary syndrome in the context of alcohol and cannabis intoxications. Patient had a history of tabagism (1 pack/day) and his father had died from acute coronary syndrome at the age of 65.	Actual	Alcohol Tobacco	Father died at 65 from coronary heart disease. BMI=20.5	Yes: 1d	Arteriography, biology, electrocardiogram	Worsening	na
2006	36	female	Diagnosis of Buerger's disease with inaugural rheumatological manifestations. Patient had tabagism (10 packs-year) and a 2-year history of daily cannabis use (2/day).	Daily: 2y	Tobacco	na	Yes: 4d	Arteriography, echodoppler, echocardiography, radiography	na	na

2007	49	male	Acute coronary syndrome. Patient described a threatening syndrome with several episodes of 10 minute-long angina pain that had occurred in the previous days. Oddly enough, these episodes had all been preceded by cannabis use, 30 minutes earlier. He was a heavy tobacco smoker with a 60 packs-year history.	Actual	Tobacco	BMI=24.2	Yes: 8d	Angioplasty coupled to cardiac stent placement, arteriography, biology screening, electrocardiogram, echography	na	na
2007	24	male	Cardiorespiratory arrest arisen 6 hours after cannabis intoxication.	Regular	Tobacco	Sudden cardiac death of great-grandfather at the age of 59. BMI= 25.4	Yes: 90d	Angioplasty, arteriography, electrocardiogram, cardiac resuscitation attempts, thrombolysis	Worsening	na
2007	39	male	A 39-year-old male presented acute coronary syndrome. He was a regular cannabis and tobacco (20 packs-year) user. He had no medicosurgical history.	Regular	Tobacco	BMI=22.4	Yes: 3d	Arteriography, angioplasty coupled to cardiac stent placement, biology screening, electrocardiogram, radiography	na	na
2007	36	male	Acute coronary syndrome in overweighted patient with dyslipemia and a more than 40 packs-year tabagism. Cannabis was found positive in toxicology.	Recent	Tobacco	Father died at 45 from coronary heart disease. BMI=24.8	Yes: 6d	Angioplasty coupled to cardiac stent placement, arteriography, biology screening, echography	Worsening	THC+
2007	29	male	Acute coronary syndrome after cannabis intake, which the patient had not used for a long time. Patient had been awakened 1 hour after use by an anginous-like pain. He was overweighted, used 1 pack of tobacco cigarettes per day and cannabis occasionally.	Actual	Tobacco	BMI=32.1	Yes: 10d	Angioplasty, arteriography, biology screening, electrocardiogram, echography, radiography, resuscitation attempts, thrombolysis	Worsening	na
2008	30	male	-	Actual	Cannabis only	na	na	na	Death	na
2008	36	male	-	Actual	Cannabis only	na	na	na	Death	na
2008	29	male	Acute coronary syndrome in a male who used between 15 and 20 joints a day and cocaine occasionally.	Daily	Cocaine	Father died at 35 from coronary heart disease. BMI=24.3	Yes	Angioplasty coupled to cardiac stent placement.	Worsening	na



2008	43	male	Diagnosis of Buerger's disease after the patient was admitted for wounds of the toe which did not seem to heal over. He had first been taken care of for intermittent claudication. Then, a surgery of the foot had been complicated by superinfection and has probably made the original point for the long-lasting wounds.	Daily: 15y	Alcohol	Intermittent claudication, Raynaud's disease	na	Arteriography, echodoppler, radiography	na	na
2008	27	male	-	Regular	Cannabis only	na	na	Angioplasty and circulatory assistance	na	THC+
2008	38	male	Atypical arteriopathy which has remained evolving although it treated. Patient smoked 1 pack of tobacco cigarettes and used several cannabis joints every day; he did not use alcohol. Neither initially traumatic nor toxic (drugs) origin could be found except from heavy tobacco and cannabis use. The pathology he suffered from was not a typical Buerger's disease and led to toe amputations. Although made aware of the risks, the patient had carried on with its uses.	Daily	Tobacco	na	Yes	Arteriography	Worsening	na
2009	37	male	-	Daily: >25y	Alcohol Tobacco Adulteration product	na	Yes	na	na	THC+ Opiates+ Morphine+ Alcohol+ Salicylate+ Phenothiazine+
2009	26	male	Transient cortical blindness and spotty amnesia in the context of acute cannabis and alcohol intoxication. Patient had neither known cardiovascular history nor risk factors except from regular tobacco and cannabis use.	Regular	Alcohol Tobacco	na	Yes: 2d	Biology, MRI scanner, radiography	Recovery	THC+ Alcohol+ Opiates- Amphetamines- Cocaine-
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2009	34	female	Patient with a history of acute coronary syndrome, tobacco and cannabis user, and under oral contraception was diagnosed a juvenile arteriopathy. She used cannabis and tobacco since she was 17 and 18, respectively, and had started reducing these uses after her cardiac episode.	Recent: 17y	Tobacco	Deep veinous thrombosis: personal and familial (brother, mother, grandmother) history. Acute coronary syndrome. Intermittent claudication.	Yes	Arteriography, biology screening, echography	na	na

2009	39	male	Diagnosis of arteriopathy in a cannabis and tobacco user since the age of 12. Patient presented necrotic wounds of the toes and inflammatory reaction of the foot and lower limb. Diagnosis was in favour of a Buerger's disease.	Recent	Tobacco	na	na	na	na	na
2010	17	male	Arteriopathy diagnosed after the patient had presented ulcerations of the upper limb, which appeared as soon as he started to use cannabis. Symptoms started to regress when patient interrupted the use.	Actual	Cannabis only	Cutis marmorata telangiectatica congenita (CMTC), Raynaud's disease	na	Arteriography, biology screening	Recovery	na
2010	na	na	Symptomatic lower limb arteriopathy found in a cannabis using patient who had resumed tobacco and cannabis consumption for 4 months.	Recent	Tobacco	na	Yes	Thromboendarterectomy	na	na
2010	23	male	Spontaneous retrosternal pain which onsetted 20 minutes after cannabis and alcohol intoxication in patient with high blood pressure.	Regular	Alcohol Tobacco	High blood pressure	na	na	na	na
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2010	29	male	Acute coronary syndrome on sound coronary arteries. Patient had neither known cardiovascular history nor risk factor but was a regular cannabis user and had used up to 1 to 2 cannabis joints a day since he was 18. Symptoms first appeared 8 hours after the use of cannabis he had bought in	Regular	Tobacco	na	Yes	Arteriography, biology, electrocardiogram, echography	na	Done but results not available

			the street.							
2010	22	female	Pounding headache episodes attributed to a spasm of cerebral artery. Patient was tobacco smoker, regular cannabis user and occasional alcohol drinker.	Regular	Alcohol Tobacco	na	Yes	MRI	na	na
2010	31	male	Stage IV lower limb arteriopathy. Patient had history of tabagism and cannabis use and of Buerger's disease.	Recent	Tobacco	Buerger's disease	Yes: 15d	Cardiac bypass	Worsening	na
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2010	23	female	-	Actual	Benzodiazepine	na	na	na	na	na

\*BMI: Body mass index, THC: Tetrahydrocannabinol