

# LETTERS

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## Medical Cannabis Use: The Authors Reply

Theodore Caputi rightly points out that there is a large discrepancy between the estimates in the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) for 2013–15 of prevalence of medical cannabis use and the results from our study (Feb 2019). Given studies that find associations between medical cannabis legislation and a wide variety of health outcomes, we agree that addressing this discrepancy is important. We believe that this discrepancy is likely due to reporting differences—that is, having past-year medical cannabis use is not the same as having a medical cannabis license.

A recent nationally representative survey of US adults found that 14.6 percent had used cannabis in the past year and 81 percent believed that cannabis had at least one benefit—with the most common benefit being pain management.<sup>1</sup> Other analyses from the 2013–15 NSDUH data set have shown increased prevalence of medical

cannabis use in states with and those without medical cannabis laws.<sup>2</sup> These data suggest that prevalence of medical cannabis use is increasing overall, even without appropriate licensing. Furthermore, as we pointed out in our article, it is possible that the declining numbers of enrolled medical cannabis patients in states that pass recreational cannabis laws may be due in part to people choosing not to go through the hassle of renewing their licenses (even though they are using cannabis medically).

Taken together, we believe that these factors likely account for the discrepancy between our report and the NSDUH data.

Kevin F. Boehnke and  
Rebecca L. Haffajee  
*University of Michigan*  
ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

## NOTES

1 Keyhani S, Steigerwald S, Ishida J, Vali M, Cerdá M, Hasin D, et al. Risks and benefits of marijuana use: a national survey of U.S. adults. *Ann Intern Med.* 2018;169(5):282–90.

2 Han B, Compton WM, Blanco C, Jones CM. Trends in and correlates of medical marijuana use among adults in the United States. *Drug Alcohol Depend.* 2018;186:120–9.