

Cannabis Use by Adolescents is Harmful. Free CME Training Can Help Healthcare Providers Prevent the Harm

An adaptation of motivational interviewing for the primary care setting can be used to help adolescents decide to stop using cannabis (marijuana).

COLUMBIA, MD, UNITED STATES,
August 20, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ --
Do Many Adolescents Use Cannabis?

“Research led by [Oregon Health & Science University](#) reveals adolescent (ages 10-19) cannabis abuse in the United States has increased drastically — by about 245% — since 2000.”

The [CDC](#) reports that in “2022, 30.7% of 12th graders reported using cannabis in the past year, and 6.3% reported using cannabis daily in the past 30 days. ... Many middle and high school students ... reported past-year cannabis vaping in 2022 ...”



Figure 1 Dad Talking with Daughter About Drugs.

What Happens When Adolescents Use Cannabis?

The CDC reports “cannabis use can have permanent effects on the developing brain when use begins in adolescence, especially with regular or heavy use.”

They go on to list some of the negative effects:

- Difficulty thinking and problem-solving
- Problems with memory and learning
- Reduced coordination
- Difficulty maintaining attention
- Problems with school and social life

“Cannabis use has been linked to a range of mental health problems, such as depression and social anxiety. ... People that begin using cannabis in their teens are more likely to have lasting brain developmental effects and a higher potential for cannabis use disorder.”

(source

<https://www.cdc.gov/cannabis/health-effects/cannabis-and-teens.html>)

What can Parents do?

The CDC suggests that “parents should talk with their children about the risks of using cannabis while their brains are still developing. They should explain that people that begin using cannabis in their teens are more likely to have lasting brain developmental effects and a higher potential for cannabis use disorder.”

However, some adolescents will resist guidance provided by their parents.



Figure 2 Role-Player David Martin

What else can be done?

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Cannabis is now legal in 24 states for recreational use and 38 for medical use. However, it’s a serious threat to the health of adolescents. Healthcare providers can help reduce these risky behaviors.”

Dale Olsen, Ph.D.

Healthcare providers can have a significant influence on adolescents, but they need to know how to help these young people decide to change their behavior. An adaptation of motivational interviewing (MI) for the primary care setting provides the needed methodology, but acquiring the required skills takes practice. Fortunately, that practice is available at no cost and comes with continuing medical education units. SIMmersion provides an overview of MI and, more importantly, an opportunity to practice interactive role-play conversations with the virtual patient [David Martin](#). By talking with David,

providers can experience how the spirit of MI can be employed in appointments with adolescent patients who report marijuana use.

Playing the Role of a Marijuana User

Role-player David Martin is a 15-year-old male who has been a patient in the provider’s practice

since he was a baby. On a patient screening questionnaire, David indicated that he has used marijuana before. He is generally healthy, with no serious or unusual conditions.

David will be different each time users talk with him, but he will always be like many other adolescent patients. Sometimes he will be more of a social user of marijuana or will be mainly using on the weekends. Other times he may be a frequent user.

Practice and Learn Motivational Techniques



Figure 3 Provider Practicing an Adaptation of MI

Conversation with David will progress through three stages: Engage, Evoke and Plan.

- First, engage David by setting a patient-centered, collaborative tone and gathering key details about his cannabis or marijuana use in a collaborative, open-ended fashion.
- Second, evoke David's reasons to change by exploring his decisional balance, drawing out change talk, and responding to sustain talk as it occurs.
- Finally, help David form a plan that works for him, letting him take the lead as much as possible and providing your own suggestions only as necessary, and always with respect for his autonomy.

Conclusion

While the use of cannabis has become more acceptable in recent years, it still represents a serious threat to adolescents' health. Healthcare providers are in a unique position to help influence these young peoples' behavior and make a difference in their lives. Visit <https://www.simmersion.com/continuingeducation> to learn more.

Earn 1.5 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™

MedChi designates this web-based enduring educational activity for a maximum of 1.5 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™. This activity has been planned and implemented in accordance with the Essential Areas and policies of the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) through the joint providership of MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society, and SIMmersion, LLC. MedChi is accredited by the ACCME to provide continuing medical education for physicians.

Earn 1.5 Contact Hours for Nurses

In support of improving patient care, this activity has been planned and implemented by SIMmersion and OnCourse Learning. OnCourse Learning is jointly accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME), the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE), and the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), to provide continuing education for the healthcare team.

About SIMmersion

SIMmersion is dedicated to revolutionizing communication skills training by integrating realistic simulation experiences, interactive content, and comprehensive feedback. With a track record spanning over two decades, SIMmersion has developed numerous NIH-funded simulations that provide students with hands-on practice in scenarios encountered with real-life individuals. Backed by extensive research, these simulations consistently demonstrate their effectiveness in skill acquisition and retention. To learn more about this training, other SIMmersion products, and SIMmersion's PeopleSim® technology, please visit www.simmersion.com.

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