

Marijuana Use Linked To Lower Stroke Risk

Those who use marijuana may benefit from a reduced chance of stroke, according to a new study.

As part of The Stroke Prevention in Young Adults Study, researchers from the University of Maryland analyzed past marijuana use among 751 stroke cases and 813 controls.

The results, which spanned 16 years, showed that those who used marijuana were less likely to suffer a stroke. 28.8% of stroke patients reported marijuana use versus 32.7% of those with no history of stroke.

While the decrease in stroke risk was statistically significant, the researchers stressed that the link does not necessarily prove that marijuana is protective.

The [findings](#) were presented earlier this month at the American Academy of Neurology's 66th Annual Meeting.

"We don't suspect that this implicates a protective effect of marijuana on ischemic stroke risk," said lead researcher and presenter Tara Dutta, MD, of the University of Maryland School of Medicine. "We will go back and look at our data more carefully and do some additional analyses to see if we can look for potential confounders."

Session cochair Lori Billingham, MD, of the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, echoed the sentiment.

"The question is still out there, the research still needs to be done. Patients are interested, and I think this lays a foundation for that," said Dr. Billingham.

However, cochair Jennifer Majersik, MD, of the University of Utah, [said](#) the study "should be reassuring" to people who smoked marijuana in the 1960s or 1970s, adding that Baby Boomers have yet to show any negative marijuana-associated effects.

Factors that seemed to increase the risk of stroke included tobacco and alcohol use and a history of diabetes and hypertension. Stroke sufferers also tended to be male.

‘Extremely Promising’

Other studies have suggested a link between marijuana use and an increased risk of stroke, but opinions remain divided. On the other hand, there is a growing body of evidence that supports a beneficial role of medical marijuana following a stroke. In 2013, researchers at the University of Nottingham analyzed pre-existing evidence and concluded that marijuana compounds, called cannabinoids, show promise in reducing the severity of stroke and improving patient outcomes.

“The data are guiding the next steps in experimental stroke in order to be able to progress onto initial safety assessments in a clinical trial,” said lead author and stroke specialist Dr. Tim England.

An earlier analysis of cannabinoids in post-stroke treatment, published in 2012, concluded that “both synthetic cannabinoids and endocannabinoids represent extremely promising therapeutic compounds.”

According to the 2012 findings, compounds that bind to the body’s marijuana pathways may offer protection against post-stroke injury due to their “potent anti-inflammatory” effects.

<http://www.leafscience.com/2014/05/13/marijuana-use-linked-lower-stroke-risk/>