**4. EndometriosisandCannabisConsumptionDuringtheCOVID-19 Pandemic: An International Cross-Sectional Survey**

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Cannabis Cannabinoid Res. 2022 Jan 21. doi: 10.1089/can.2021.0162. Online ahead of print.**

Abstract

Introduction: Endometriosis affects 1 in 10 women worldwide, with most experiencing difficulties achieving adequate symptom control. These difficulties have been compounded by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic due to worldwide shifts in health care resource allocation. As cannabis is a relatively common form of self- management in endometriosis, this study aims to explore the impact of the COVID- 19 pandemic on cannabis consumption in those with endometriosis.

Methods: An anonymous, cross-sectional online international survey was developed and promoted by endometriosis advocacy/support organizations worldwide. Respondents needed to have a diagnosis of endometriosis and be aged between 18 and 55.

Results: A total of 1634 responses were received from 46 different countries. The average age of respondents was 30, with a mean diagnosis age of 25. Eight hundred forty-six respondents (51%) reported consuming cannabis in the past 3 months, with 55% of these reporting use for symptom management only. One in five respondents (20%) reported having consumed cannabis previously, the most common reason for discontinuation (65%) was access difficulties during COVID. Those who had legal access were more likely to consume cannabis than those without (*p*<0.0001) and were more likely to disclose usage to health care professionals (*p*<0.0001). The most common reasons for consuming cannabis during COVID was increased stress/anxiety (59%) and lack of access to normal medical care (48%). Pre- pandemic, cannabis was mostly consumed at least once a day (61%) and in inhaled forms (51.6%). Consumption increased for most people (57%) during the pandemic. During the pandemic just under a quarter (23%) of respondents changed their mode of consumption, with a reduction in inhaled forms (39.5%) and an increase in consumption of edibles (40%) or oil (25.2%).

Conclusions: Cannabis consumption, especially for symptom relief, was relatively common among those with endometriosis, with some people starting their consumption of cannabis due to health care restrictions that occurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Difficulties accessing cannabis and unpleasant/unwanted side effects were the most common reasons for lack of current cannabis consumption in those who had previously consumed it. Cannabis consumption may form an important part of endometriosis management especially when access to routine medical care is restricted.

Keywords: COVID-19; access; cannabis; endometriosis; legal; management.