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Association of Adolescent Cannabis Use and Risk of Psychosis After Adjustment with Prodromal Symptoms

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Introduction: Recent studies have shown that cannabis use acts as a specific risk factor provoking the onset of psychosis in vulnerable individuals. Association of adolescent cannabis use and psychosis risk was studied after adjustment with prodromal symptoms.

Objectives: To assess possible causality between cannabis use and the risk of psychosis.

Aims: To examine associations between cannabis use and the risk of psychosis in 10 years follow-up while taking into account the prodromal symptoms of psychosis in a prospective general population sample.

Methods: The sample (N=6258) composed of a prospective Northern Finland Birth Cohort 1986. Questionnaire on prodromal symptoms for psychosis (PROD-screen) and on drug use was conducted when the cohort members were 15-16 years old. The participants were asked if they had tried cannabis: never, once, 2-4 times, 5 times or more. Information on psychoses was gathered from registers until age 27 years.

Results: In total 102 new psychoses emerged. The proportion of psychoses in the groups 'never', 'once', '2-4 times', '5 times or more' were 1.5%, 2.8%, 3.6%, and 8.5%, respectively. The hazard ratio (HR) for risk of psychosis in subjects who had tried cannabis 5 times or more was 5.9 (95% CI 2.4-14.4) when compared to non-users. The association remained statistically significant when adjusted for prodromal symptoms and parental psychosis (HR 2.6, 1.0-6.6). When gender and smoking was taken into account association was no longer significant (HR 2.3, 0.9-6.0).

Conclusions: Adolescent cannabis use associates with increased risk of first-episode psychosis even after controlling for baseline prodromal symptoms.