Reviewer’s report

Title: Alcohol and cannabis use as risk factors for injury - a case-crossover analysis in a Swiss emergency department

Version: 1 Date: 7 October 2008

Reviewer: Mitch Earleywine

Reviewer’s report:

ALCOHOL AND CANNABIS USE AS RISK FACTORS FOR INJURY

This is an intriguing study of a large sample of ER visitors, which examines relative risk of cannabis, alcohol, or both on injury. The data suggest that alcohol consumption clearly increases the risk of injury, whereas cannabis consumption does not. This result has important implications; it will undoubtedly generate tremendous controversy. Unfortunately, only 14 men and no women had used cannabis prior to the injury that sent them to the ER. Because this subsample is so small, I’m afraid that generalizations about cannabis will be extremely difficult to make. The fact that so few people report to an ER after using cannabis is an interesting finding in and of itself, but critics will simply point to the fact that exclusion criteria may have left those who were most in need of medical care out of the study. These may be the very people who had used cannabis. If there were some way to know the rates of cannabis and alcohol use among those who were severely injured, the paper would be markedly stronger. As an alternative, a larger sample that had at least 30 ER visitors who had used cannabis would make for an easier argument about generalization to cannabis use in general. I would love to see a finding like this make it to print, but it’s got to have a large enough sample to battle the inevitable criticisms it’s bound to generate.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests