Reviewer's report

Title: Rheumatologists Lack Confidence in their Knowledge of Cannabinoids Pertaining to the Management of Rheumatic Complaints

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Reviewer: Meldon Kahan

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I have only two comments.
1. The response rate to the survey was only 25%, which, as the paper mentioned, is typical for physician surveys. Were there differences in demographics between responders and non-responders?

2. My major concern about the paper is in its interpretation of the results. The current controversy about medical marijuana centers primarily on the role of dried cannabis (“medical marijuana”) in treatment. Pharmacological cannabinoids such as nabilone are legal and readily available, and research on their safety and efficacy, while still modest, is considerably more advanced than research on dried cannabis. Furthermore, pharmacological cannabinoids have a reliable and safe delivery system, whereas smoking is an uncontrolled delivery system, and combustion creates hundreds of toxic byproducts.

If the paper is published, I believe it should be accompanied by a commentary giving an overview of the evidence on dried cannabis and rheumatological pain; or, the evidence should at least be mentioned in the discussion. To my knowledge, there have been no controlled trials on dried cannabis and rheumatological pain. The five controlled trials on neuropathic pain were extremely small and brief. There is only one trial comparing dried cannabis to a pharmacological cannabinoid, and the latter provided superior analgesia. On the other hand, dried cannabis has enormous evidence of harm, including psychosis, motor vehicle accidents, and addiction.

This puts a different perspective on the results. Among confident respondents, 27% had recommended a trial of medical cannabis, compared to only 7% of non-confident respondents. The authors are concerned about this result, but if there is no evidence to support a role for dried cannabis in the management of rheumatological pain, then rheumatologists' reluctance to prescribe is entirely appropriate. Indeed, those rheumatologists who are most confident in their knowledge of cannabinoids are also more likely to prescribe medical cannabis, which suggests to me that confidence is inversely correlated with knowledge and competence in prescribing.