Author’s response to reviews

Title: Marijuana legalization and historical trends in marijuana use among US residents aged 12-25: Results from the 1979-2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health

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Response to reviewers’ comments

Comments from Reviewer 1:
Q1: I thank BMC public health for the possibility to review this revised manuscript. I find that the authors have answered all my previous questions adequately and that the manuscript is now (almost) ready for publication.
Reply: Thank you very much, and really appreciate the helpful comments.

Q2: Page 4 line 71. I react to the term "legalizing medical marijuana". All approved medicinal products are "legal". For the most part medical cannabis in Europe is by the extract "Sativex", and not by marijuana. I would suggest a rewrite that points to this: e.g.: "... many of them have medical cannabis registered as a treatment option…" or likewise.
Reply: Thank you for your suggestion, and we revised accordingly (Line 71-72, Page 4).

Q3: Page 5 line, 105: I am not sure that this final argument is very different form the first argument (line 96).
Reply: We combined these two points together to better explain the limitation of previous studies (Line 96-102, Page 5).

Comments from Reviewer 2:
Q4: The limitations section should draw attention to the fact that the discussion of the legal context at different times is discursive and lacks methodological rigor. The authors' reply states that: "We put it as a limitation (Line 344-345, Page 16)". But I do not see a response either at the point indicated or elsewhere. The issue I raised is that the authors' account of the legal context lacks methodological rigour. It seeks post hoc to identify legal innovations that might explain the data, but does not constitute - for example - a systematic review of all potential influences. Another way to view this issue is that the authors could have made some ad hoc predictions about the data they obtained based on a prior
consideration of how legal innovations would be expected to influence drug use. So I repeat: this limitation should be discussed.

Reply: Thank you very much for this thoughtful comment. We like the alternative way you suggested to discuss the limitation. Thus, we expanded the text on this limitation as “Although a systematic review of all laws and regulations related to marijuana and other drugs is beyond the scope of this study, findings from our study provide new data from a historical perspective much needed for the current trend in marijuana legalization across the nation to get the benefit from marijuana while to protect vulnerable children and youth in the United States” (Line 357-361, Page 17).