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The 2nd International
Medical Cannabis Conference

June 4-6, 2017

Dan Panorama Hotel, Tel Aviv, Israel



Examining Potential Spillover Effects Of Medical Cannabis Narratives On Recreational Cannabis Attitudes

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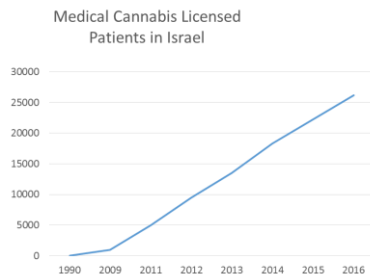
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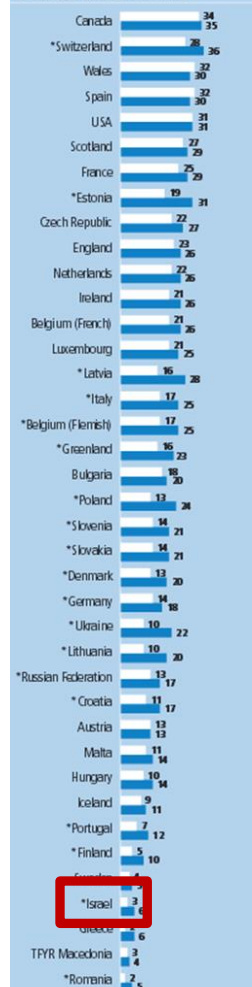
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- According to UN drug conventions, cannabis is the most widely used illegal drug world wide
 - By international standards, Israel has relatively low levels of illegal cannabis use
- Cannabis is used legally as a medicine in increasing jurisdictions



15-year-olds who have ever used cannabis in their lifetime



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Medical and recreational users differ in terms of:

- Mode of use (vape vs. smoke) (Pacula, Jacobson et al. 2015, Lin, Ilgen et al. 2016, Sznitman 2017)
- Frequency of use (daily vs. not daily use) (Pacula, Jacobson et al. 2015, Lin, Ilgen et al. 2016, Sznitman 2017)
- Quantity of use (high dose vs. low dose) (Pacula, Jacobson et al. 2015, Lin, Ilgen et al. 2016, Sznitman 2017)
- Motivation for use (symptom relief vs. getting high) (Bostwick 2012)

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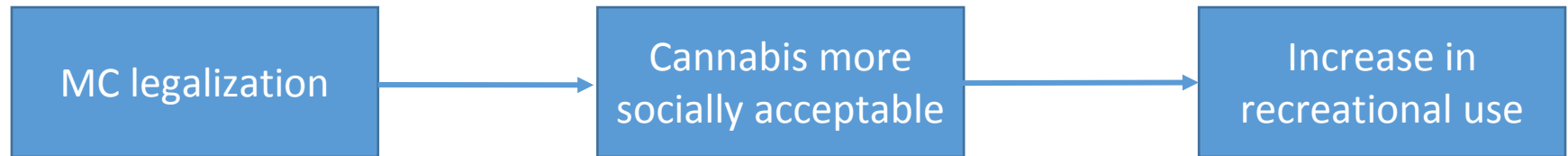
But there are blurred boundaries in that:

- It is the same substance
- A substantial proportions of MC users use cannabis recreationally (Pacula, Jacobson et al. 2015)
- Recreational users tend to report medical motivations for use (Sznitman 2017)
- More than half of news stories in the U.S. on recreational cannabis legalization mentioned MC (McGinty, Samples et al. 2016)

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- Why should we care about the potential medical – recreational cannabis use connection?
 - While there are medical benefits of cannabis, there are potential associated harms including:
 - Acute intoxication
 - Impaired driving and learning capacity
 - Poor educational and social outcomes
 - Psychoses



The current evidence-base on the MC – RC link

- Overall, studies fail to show a direct association between MC legalization and increases in recreational cannabis use (Sznitman and Zolotov 2015)
- However, MC commercialization has been shown to influence use of and attitudes toward recreational cannabis (Schuermeyer, 2014; D'Amico et al., 2015)
- This suggests that MC media coverage (commercial or otherwise) influences public attitudes toward recreational cannabis

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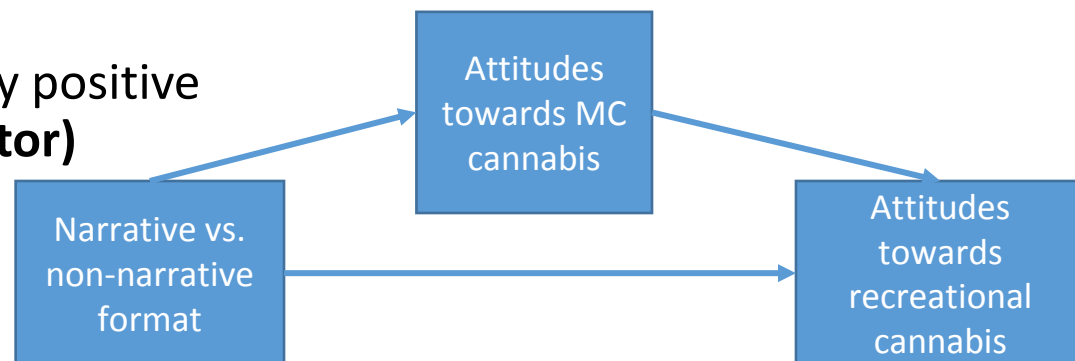
How may media coverage of medical cannabis influence attitudes towards recreational cannabis?

- MC has received widespread media coverage, much of which is based on narratives/patient testimonials (study 1 Lewis et al.)
 - Focus on positive therapeutic effects of cannabis in addition to struggles of patients to obtain licenses
- These narratives may be a particularly strong influence on public opinion as they offer a personal and emotional perspective on complex MC issues



Aim

- To test effects of MC patient narratives on audience attitudes towards recreational cannabis use
- Hypothesis:
 - Compared to exposure to information in a non-narrative format, information about the effectiveness of MC presented in narrative form will be associated with more positive attitudes towards **recreational cannabis use (dependent variable)**
 - This effect will be mediated by positive attitudes towards **MC (mediator)**



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Methods: design

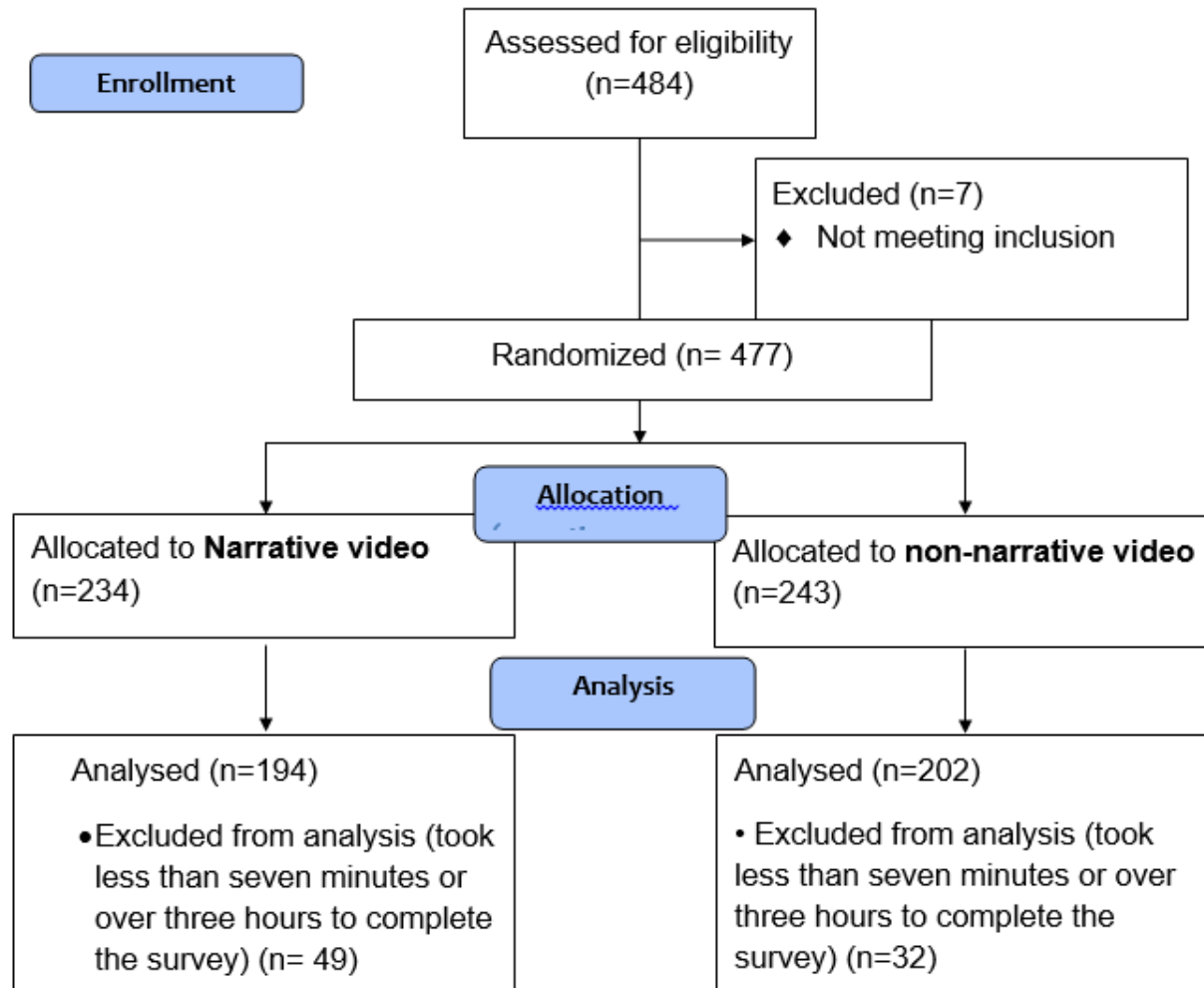
- Participants were randomly exposed to view a narrative OR non-narrative video
 - A. a “medical cannabis patient” tells his story about MC (3 min)
 - B. a video where the same information was presented in factual non-narrative format
- Same actor
- Same setting (place and day)
- Same background
- Content is uniform across condition besides manipulation factors

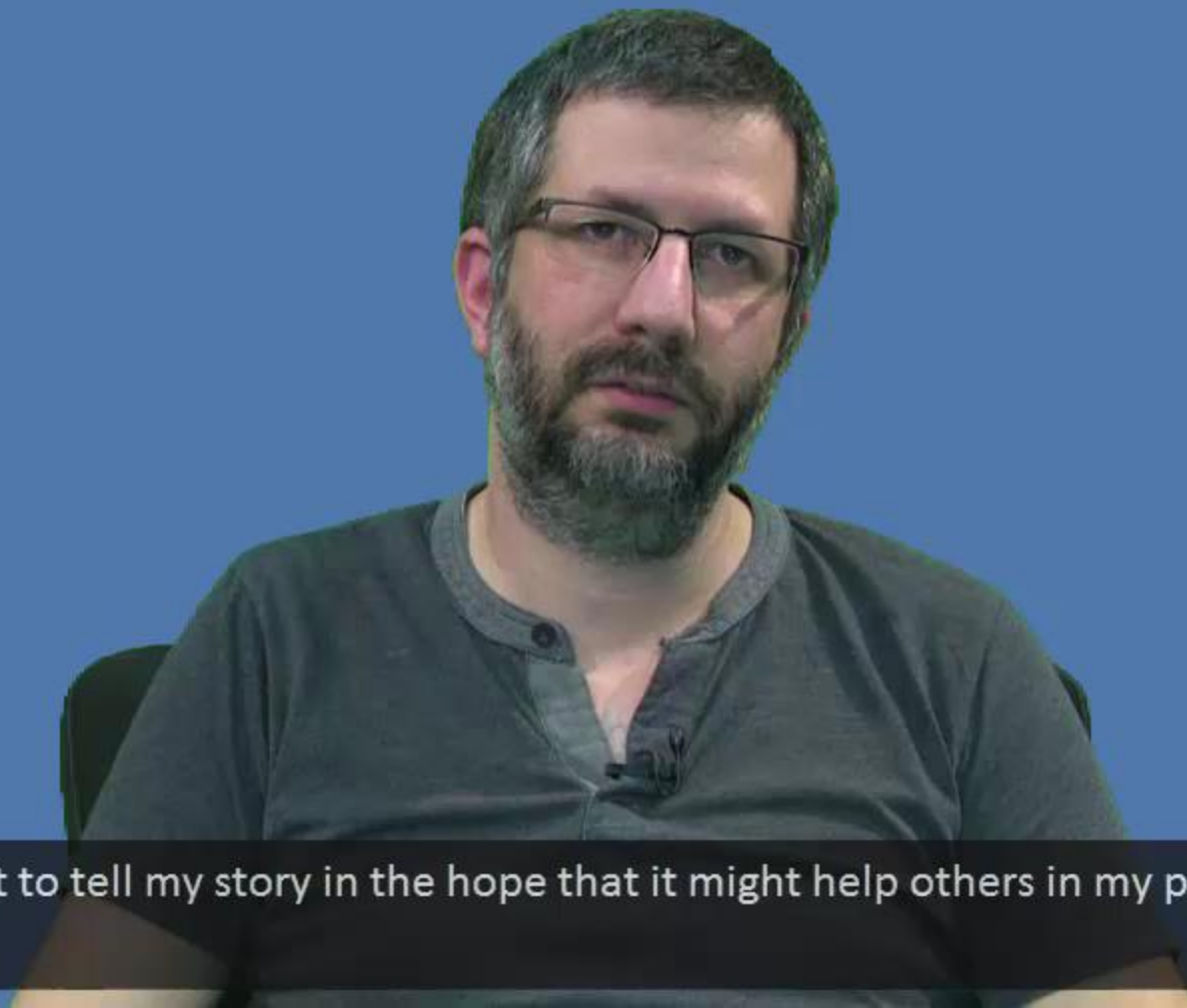


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I want to tell my story in the hope that it might help others in my position.

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Methods: measures

Independent variable: 0 = non-narrative video, 1 = narrative video

Mediator variable: Attitudes toward Medical Cannabis (6 items)

- *The benefits of using medical cannabis outweigh the risks involved in its use*
- *There is an empirical basis that supports the use of medical cannabis*
- *Medical cannabis has fewer side effects compared with other prescription treatment options*

1 = Do not agree at all; 5 = Agree completely

$M = 5.37, SD = 1.24, \alpha = 0.88$



Methods: measures

Dependent variable: Attitudes toward Recreational Cannabis
(6 items)

- *Cannabis use for all purposes (medical and recreational) should be legal*
- *Using cannabis once a month is not dangerous*
- *I would use cannabis for recreational purposes if a friend offered it to me*

1 = Do not agree at all; 5 = Agree completely

M = 3.40, SD = 1.48, α = 0.82

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Methods: statistical analyses

Mediation analysis in PROCESS (Hayes, 2013, publically available macros)

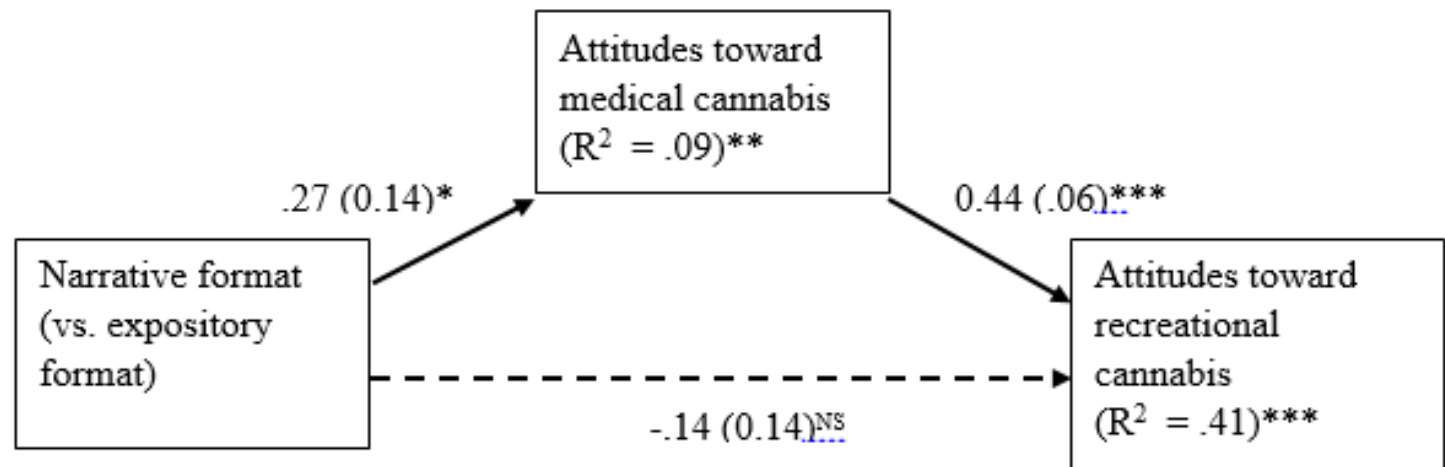
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Results

Standardized coefficients for the final mediation model ($n = 263$)



Note. * $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$. N.S. = $p > 0.05$;

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Discussion

- This study raises questions about the extent to which the public distinguish between medical and recreational cannabis use
- Medical cannabis media coverage influences attitudes towards recreational cannabis use

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Disclosures

I (Sharon Sznitman) have no financial relationships to disclose concerning the content of this presentation or session