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**EFFECTIVENESS OF TREATMENT FOR CANNABIS USE
DISORDER IN NEW ZEALAND**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Philosophy
in Rehabilitation

at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand

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2000

ABSTRACT

This study, believed to be the first cannabis treatment outcome study in New Zealand, used a naturalistic design to examine the relationships among client characteristics and correlates of cannabis use problems, treatment variables, outcome measures, and client satisfaction. Participants were 63 persons seeking treatment for cannabis use problems recruited from four geographically diverse outpatient settings. All participants completed baseline assessment and began treatment as typically delivered at New Zealand drug treatment services. A high rate of attrition characterized the study from very early on and continued through follow-up. Eighteen participants completed posttreatment assessment. Outcome measures for those who completed treatment revealed a significant reduction in both cannabis use and psychological distress, accompanied by a significant increase in self-efficacy. A significant correlation between attending more sessions and better outcomes on days of cannabis use and self-efficacy was also noted. However, at treatment termination two-thirds (12) were still using cannabis on at least 3 days per week, with half (9) using daily/near daily. Hypotheses regarding the relationship between theoretically important client variables and treatment dropout were tested. No predictors of dropout were established. Attrition peaked at 86% at the final assessment point with 8 (only) responses to the 3-month follow-up survey. While clients were generally satisfied with treatment services received, some suggestions for improvement to the cannabis treatment programmes were made. Retention- and therapeutic-enhancement strategies are discussed in terms of making treatment services more responsive to identified client needs to improve outcomes. Recommendations for clinical and research attention include the development of individualized treatment packages tailored to meet the presenting needs and deficits of cannabis clients, and ongoing routine evaluation of these programmes.

For my children
Virginia and Shane
with love

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I wish to thank my supervisor Ann Flintoft for her expert guidance as well as her personal understanding and support throughout the four years of our association. It has been a lengthy challenge, Ann, and your unremitting enthusiasm and encouragement when the end felt so far away was especially valued. My heartfelt thanks.

My grateful thanks to Ted Drawneek for consultation with regard to the many statistical issues that arose in this study. Faced with my insatiable curiosity, your patience and constant good humour was indeed remarkable.

My sincere thanks to all those who participated in this study. A special tribute goes to the Counsellors and Coordinators who perceived the need for this research, and freely gave of their precious time and energies. Your role in the study's success was critical, and your contribution much appreciated.

Finally, it is with deep appreciation that I acknowledge my dear mother, husband and family, and friends, for their unflagging faith in me over the years. Your love and support has carried me through.

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