

Reasons for interest or non-interest in medical marijuana as a treatment among older adults with chronic pain: An analysis of open-ended survey response

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BACKGROUND

- Medical marijuana (MM) use is becoming more common, especially among older adults
- Chronic pain is a main reason reported for MM use
 - Older adults may seek MM as an alternative treatment to conventional pain medications¹
- One study found that among older adults²:
 - 69% felt that marijuana could potentially provide pain relief
 - 57% believed that conventional pain medications had more prevalent side effects
 - 48% believed conventional pain medications had a higher addiction risk
- There is a need to understand contributory factors on the decision to use MM

OBJECTIVE

- This study aims to explore reasons for interest or non-interest in using MM among older adults with chronic pain

METHODS

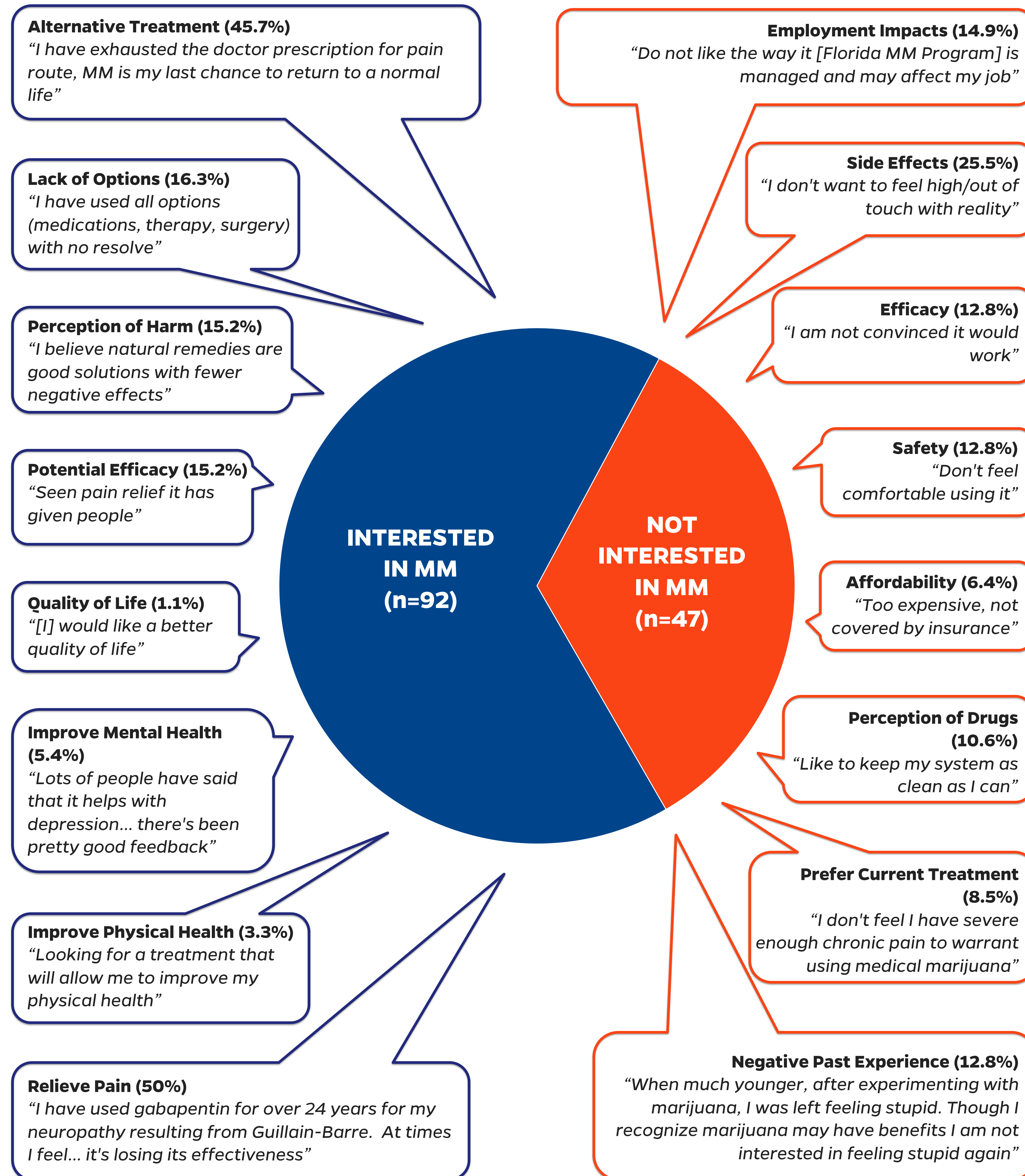
STUDY SAMPLE

- Data derived from the Study on Medical marijuana and Its Long-term Effects (SMILE)
 - Ongoing prospective cohort study in Florida
 - 12 month follow up
 - Recruitment methods include UF Consent2Share and PRICE registries, UF Health and MM clinics, flyers, radio advertising, and word of mouth
- 139 individuals aged 50 years and older with non-cancer chronic musculoskeletal or neuropathic pain

MEASURES AND ANALYSIS

- Participants responded to open-ended questions on their intention to use or not use MM at the SMILE baseline visit
- Thematic coding was conducted using NVivo software
 - Similar codes were grouped to generate themes and subthemes
 - Interested in MM (n=92)
 - Not Interested in MM (n=47)

RESULTS



CONCLUSIONS

INTERESTED IN MM

- The desire to use MM as an alternative to conventional pain treatments and relieve pain were among the most reported reasons for interest
- Individuals interested in using MM have more positive perceptions of MM compared to those not interested
 - These findings are similar to previous research on perceptions of MM treatment²

NOT INTERESTED IN MM

- Concerns surrounding side effects was the most reported reason for non-interest, followed by employment impacts, safety and efficacy of MM, and negative past experiences using marijuana
- Individuals not interested in MM considered satisfaction with current treatments, along with potential risks of using MM
 - This is consistent with the health belief model³

TAKEAWAYS

- The findings from this study can help to inform educational interventions and tools for patients interested in MM treatment
 - Information on the potential benefits, risks, and safety of MM use
 - Resources for individuals needing financial and/or employment support
- Future observational studies on MM treatments should consider adjusting for pre-existing attitudes and beliefs
- There is a need for further qualitative studies on attitudes and perceptions of MM treatment among this population



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