Cannabis: the YoDA experience

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What I’ll touch on....

- The YoDA service
- The dominance of cannabis
- Cannabis related complications
- Young cannabis smokers perspectives
The YoDA Service
The YoDA Service

• Established in 2005 by the HSE
• Aim is to provide out patient treatment to under 18s with complicated drug or alcohol problems
• It is a tier 3 service – we have mental health and substance use related skills
• It is not part of the mental health services
• **4 full time staff members**
  1. Clinical Nurse Specialist
  2. Family Therapist
  3. Counsellor
  4. Psychiatric Registrar
What do we see in clinical practice?
Psychiatric disorder is common
Spectrum of substance use

- Never used
- Experimental use
- Infrequent use
- Regular use
- Ex-User
- Dependent use
- Substance abuse
Harm reduction is key

Never used

Experimental use

Infrequent use

Ex-User

Dependent use

Regular use

Substance abuse

Primary prevention

Secondary prevention

Treatment

Harm reduction
2 streamed approach

Adolescent
• Counselling
• Motivational interviewing
• CBT / ACRA
• Family Therapy
• Health Screening & Education
• Psychiatric assessment & treatment (if needed)
• Harm reduction advice

Parent / Guardian
• Family Therapy
• Advice and support
• Parent support group
• ACRA (skills training)
• Education
The rise and rise of cannabis
Marijuana

It's not just for Hippies anymore!
Hash  V  weed

- Cheap
- Relatively weak
- Viewed as impure
- Rare
- Often used by younger smokers

- Expensive
- Quite strong
- Viewed as natural
- Very common
- Used by all but associated with “connoisseurs”
Bongs and joints
Why do young people use cannabis

Access

Experience

Perception
Lifetime use and ease of access
The Cost of Cannabis
The cost of cannabis

- Typically sold in €50 bags
- Many teens using a bag a day
- Or €350 a week
- Heroin only €20 / bag
- The problem is that this is expensive!
The cost of cannabis use

- Over time the teenager gets €200 - €300 on loan
- When they can't pay things come to a head
- We have met numerous families paying out €1,000 +
2 main cannabis problems

1. Due to the cost of using it (and the fact it is available on credit) means that teenagers run up considerable debts. This leads to threats, intimidation and various activities to try and pay for it.

2. When they don’t have cannabis and are going through withdrawals clients are often very threatening and intimidating, particularly towards parents. Child to parent violence is common.
Young people’s perspectives
The study..

• In our experience cannabis is seen as a different drug by society and young people – e.g. it should be legalised, it’s safe, not addictive, a soft drug

• We really wanted to understand young people’s experience of and attitude towards cannabis after they had gone to a service for their cannabis

• We hoped this would help us to understand our clients better but also allow us to help others understand cannabis smokers
What we did

• We recruited 8 young people who were all attending treatment services where their primary drug problem was cannabis
• They each completed a semi-structured interview lasting 15-40 minutes which was audio recorded
• This was transcribed and analysed using the thematic analysis method outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006)
• 3 authors – Philip James, Dr. Catherine Comiskey & Dr. Bobby Smyth
### The participants

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<th>Alias</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
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<th>Heaviest use</th>
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<td>male</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12 or 13</td>
<td>Daily - €100+</td>
</tr>
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<td>Barry</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Daily - €100+</td>
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<td>Carol</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>Derek</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>11 or 12</td>
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<td>Ed</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Daily - €50</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Daily - &gt; €50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harry</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Daily - €25</td>
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So in summary...

• 5 boys, 3 girls
• Mean age 16.75 (15-18 years)
• Started using cannabis from 11 to 15 – mean age was 13.1
• Key year was 1st year
• 7/8 used daily
• Spend from €50 to >€700 per week
• 4 admitted dealing
Cannabis and me

1st use

The Drug

Addiction

+ effects

Neg. effects
Cannabis and me

How to pay

Dealers & Credit

Funding

Threats

Selling