INTRODUCTION:

- Marijuana (MJ) is 1st illicit substance used by adolescents
- Legal, widely available, complete harmlessness
- MJ use: 16% of 8th graders, 46% of 12th graders
- Preteen MJ use (PMU)
- Psychiatric comorbidity
- Legal
- School dropout
- Impeded brain development during adolescence
- Emerging policies are legalizing MJ use

METHODS:

- **SUBJECTS AND PROCEDURES:**
  - Exclusion: DSM-IV Dx for SDD
  - Recruitment: demographic data, data from clinician reports, medical records
  - PMU defined: first use of MJ < 13 years
  - PMU defined: age of first use, suicidality
  - Teen Treatment Services Review: legal (validation)
  - Time Use-Filler back-interview: label of substance consumption

- **STATISTICAL ANALYSIS:**
  - Univariate comparisons using Fisher’s Exact Test or Kousal-Wallis Chi-Square Text
  - Multivariate stepwise regression predicting PMU
  - Predictor variables: Variables associated with PMU from univariate analyses
  - Main effects entered first followed by interaction terms with PMU

RESULTS:

- **Sample Characteristics (Table 1):**
  - N=136 youth with Substance Dependence Disorder (SDD)
  - Age 14-18
  - 48% female
  - 52% from single parent households
  - 53% with parental SDD
  - 34% minority

- Rates of SDD (Table 2): 65% MJ dependent, 55% alcohol dependent

- Characteristics associated with PMU when entering treatment (Figure 1):
  - Younger
  - MJ dependent
  - Nicotine dependent
  - More comorbid SDDs
  - More traffic violations

- Potential precursors of PMU (Figure 1):
  - Ethnic
  - Less educated parents
  - History of PTSD
  - Suicide attempts
  - MJ use

- Majority (55%) of PMU adolescents with SDD first used MJ (Figure 1):
  - MJ use is most likely to be first substance used by preteen youth

- Future Directions:
  - Different age of first use prospectively
  - Need to follow the sample to determine
  - If improvement in outcomes is seen after Tx
  - If preteen MJ is associated with less response to Tx

DISCUSSION:

- This study supports a significant relationship between PMU and poor outcomes
- Largest clinical sample of substance dependent youths equally balanced by gender
- PMU - 9 ate Tx with more impairment
- More comorbid SDDs
- MJ and hallucinogen dependent
- Younger
- More suicide attempts
- Current PTSD
- History of traffic violations

- Study Limitations:
  - Sample
  - Treatment-seeking population
  - Identified predictors of PMU may be related to unmeasured condition (i.e. depression)
  - Identified potential precursors of PMU suggestive of environmental action
  - MJ is most likely to be first substance used by preteen youth

- **RESULTS:**

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  - If improvement in outcomes is seen after Tx
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  - Adolescent brain growth is at its peak at age 12, a vulnerable threshold age as shown by results of this study
  - Future work separated on brain growth interference associated with PMU

- Evidence could inform policies re: legalizing marijuana use

REFERENCES: