"That dab hit just melted my entire face": Tweets about high-potency marijuana

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Background

- Marijuana concentrates can contain up to 80% THC,1,2 whereas plant-based marijuana averages around 12% THC.2
- Consumed through vaporization; colloquially called dabbing
- Produces a quicker, more intense "high"
- Users report experiencing increased tolerance and withdrawal tendencies that could align with symptoms of misuse and tolerance.

Purpose of the current study

- To examine dabbing-related content on Twitter and gain insights into the effects experienced after engaging in this behavior.

Methods

- Collected 206,854 tweets containing dabbing-related keywords from January 1 to January 31, 2015 using GNIP (Table 1); randomly choose 5,000 for qualitative analysis.

Table 1. Dabbing-related keywords

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>dab or #dab</th>
<th>&quot;hash oil&quot; or #hashoil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dabors or #dabs</td>
<td>&quot;THC oil&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dabbing or #dabbing</td>
<td>#710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dabbin or #dabbin</td>
<td>shatter or #shatter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dabbler or #dabbers</td>
<td>wax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dabbors or #dabbers</td>
<td>&quot;dab life&quot; or #dablife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oil</td>
<td>&quot;honey oil&quot; or #honeyoil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use with blow torch</td>
<td>e-nail or #enail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Tweets unrelated to dabbing marijuana concentrates were removed, resulting in 3,540 tweets to be analyzed for themes developed by the research team.

Results

Top dabbing-related themes

N = 3,540 dabbing-related tweets

\[849 (24\%)\] Currently dabbing, wants/plans to dab, dabbing in recent past

\[763 (22\%)\] Intense high and/or extreme effects from dabbing

\[559 (16\%)\] dabbing with friends or as a social activity

\[517 (15\%)\] Excessive or heavy dabbing

N = 333 with humorous images excluded

Sub-analysis of specific extreme effects from dabbing

Physiological effects n = 124/333 (37%)

- Passed out or loss of consciousness n = 46/333 (14%)
- Respiratory effects n = 30/333 (9%)

Cognitive / Psychological effects n = 55/333 (17%)

- Confusion or distorted reality n = 37/333 (11%)
- Memory loss/forgetfulness n = 53/333 (2%)

Conclusions

- Dabbing marijuana concentrates is a popular method of ingesting marijuana, and scientific research is sparse.
- Tweets about heavy and successive dabbing sessions signal tendencies that could align with symptoms of misuse and tolerance.
- Tweets depict numerous physical and mental effects following dabbing, which appear intense in contrast to the milder effects of more traditional forms of marijuana.4,5
- Both the short and long-term health effects of dabbing marijuana concentrates remains widely unknown.
- Future research is needed to pinpoint these more extreme effects and investigate the potential severity of health consequences associated with consuming these highly concentrated forms of marijuana.

Limitations

- Tweets examined over a one-month period
- Limited keyword list
- Cannot determine if effects are adverse or unwanted versus expected and/or enjoyed
- Unable to determine the extent to which the tweets reflect accurate dabbing use behaviors and effects from dabbing

References

1. Brayton JM, Miller BL. Assessing the dangers of "dabbing" use into the effects associated with dabbing marijuana concentrates. Drug Alcohol Depend. 2015; 153: 133-139

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