



ISHLT

A Society that Includes Basic Science, the Failing Heart, & Advanced Lung Disease

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Researchers call for national guidelines on marijuana use and heart transplant eligibility

Differences in state marijuana laws lead to different regulations among transplant centers

- Common path forward would ensure equitable distribution of organs

ORLANDO, Fla April 4, 2019 – While marijuana laws differ from state-to-state, researchers are calling for uniform guidelines for marijuana use and transplant organ eligibility.

Current guidelines endorsed by the International Society for Heart and Lung Transplantation (ISHLT) allow centers to develop their own criteria for patients who use marijuana – and they typically reflect the state’s laws. But standard guidelines across the U.S. would ensure donor organs are allocated more fairly, report Ersilla M. DeFilippis, MD, Columbia University School of Medicine in New York, and Michael M. Givertz, MD, Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston, Mass., whose paper was published in *The Journal of Heart and Lung Transplantation* released to coincide with ISHLT’s 39th Annual Meeting in Orlando, Fla. This week.

“Although substance use disorder has long been considered a contraindication to organ transplantation, in the setting of changing state and local laws regarding the legality of marijuana, this issue has taken on new relevance for both patients and providers,” said Givertz.

The researchers say a chief concern is the limited data on marijuana use and transplant outcomes, leaving transplant centers to base their guidelines on state legislation rather than research. The paper notes that marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug in the United States and is increasingly widespread among young adults.

Another concern, researchers say, is that because of the varying guidelines toward marijuana use, some patients search for heart transplant programs that are more permissive and list at multiple institutions, which skews the donor pool.

Post-implant impact of marijuana

While research on the impact of marijuana among organ recipients is sparse, some evidence suggests pharmacologic concerns with cannabinoids in the post-transplant setting. For example, the researchers note that they have seen patients where cannabinoids can inhibit the metabolism of tacrolimus, a common immunosuppressant.

“But these are only case reports and longitudinal, large-scale data is needed,” said Givertz.

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About ISHLT

The International Society for Heart and Lung Transplantation is a not-for-profit, multidisciplinary professional organization dedicated to improving the care of patients with advanced heart or lung disease through transplantation, mechanical support and innovative therapies. With more than 3,800 members in more than 45 countries, ISHLT is the world’s largest organization dedicated to the research, education and advocacy of end-stage heart and lung disease. ISHLT members represent more than 15 different professional disciplines. For more information, visit www.isHLT.org.