**Cannabis Use and Transition to Psychosis: Is Interpretation of Unpleasant Effects a Mediating Variable?**

To the Editor,

The recent paper in *Psychological Medicine* by Valmaggia et al (2014) provided a useful longitudinal perspective on whether cannabis us increases the risk of transition to psychosis in those who are ultra-high risk. The authors found that many in the sample stopped using cannabis due to adverse side effects such as paranoia and hearing voices. Previous research with non-clinical populations has demonstrated that cannabis use can induce acute psychotic-type experiences such as this (D’Souza et al., 2004; Hammersley & Leon, 2006). The authors argue this suggests that cannabis is not used for self-medication in those at high risk, and that they may be more likely to link psychotic experiences to cannabis use.

Valmaggia et al (2014) also showed that those with historic use were no more likely to develop psychosis, but those with frequent or early onset use were at an increased risk. It is possible, in our opinion, that the interpretation of the unpleasant effects of acute cannabis intoxication may be a mediating variable between frequency and age of onset and subsequent transition to psychosis. Specifically, those who have been using heavily/and or for many years may be less likely to interpret the acute effects of intoxication as being the result of cannabis use (i.e. I’ve been smoking for 13 years and it’s never made me paranoid). An external attribution for these unusual experiences may therefore be more likely (for example that these are due to being spied on/punished). In line with cognitive models of delusions and hallucinations (Freeman et al., 2002; Garety et al., 2001), such external attributions are likely to escalate an initial to escalate an unusual experiences into psychosis.

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**References**

Valgmaggia et al

D’Souza et al., 2004;

Hammersley & Leon, 2006

Freeman et al., 2002;

Garety et al., 2001