Viewpoint: Cannabis legalization fraught with 'confusion and false promises'

Not all cannabis is created equal; neither are the people that use it. As an epidemiologist, I have studied cannabis as a plant, potential therapeutic agent and potential health risk over the past decade. My research has revealed a concerning trend of confusion and false promises when it comes to the purported health effects of this increasingly popular substance.

Routinely, a new cannabis-infused product claims to relieve a multitude of ailments. But alarmingly, most of these unregulated products make such claims with neither scientific evidence to back them nor regard for potential long-term health consequences. When it comes to cannabis, the pace at which scientists are coming to understand the health effects of the substance pales in comparison with the speed at which it is becoming available to patients and the general population.

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That lack of public awareness includes knowledge about the risks and benefits of cannabis use. From a public health standpoint, it is paramount that education be based on scientific findings rather than hearsay. Unfortunately, people's eagerness to try cannabis is outweighing their eagerness to understand its long-term health effects. For that reason, decision makers should strategically prioritize cannabis-related health surveillance and research on health effects in parallel with creating policy and regulation.

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