Cannabis use in patients with schizophrenia: motivation for use and relation to clinical variables
Dekker, N.

Citation for published version (APA):
CHAPTER 3.2

Letter to the editor: Reply to Fan and Hart


We thank Fan and Hart (2011) for their comments on our paper (Dekker et al 2010). We agree that using the term ‘brain abnormalities’ could be seen as less appropriate. We twice use this term in the discussion when we state that ‘cannabis naïve schizophrenia patients showed brain abnormalities in the splenium of the corpus callosum, compared to early onset cannabis users’, and later when we state that ‘we identified congruent anatomical and diffusion abnormalities manifesting in the posterior corpus callosum, a brain area adjacent to the PCC- in cannabis naïve schizophrenia patients.’ As Fan and Hart suggest, the word ‘abnormality’ should only be used when there is a difference from the normal. Therefore, in future papers, we agree that it is better not to use the word ‘abnormalities’, but ‘reduced fractional anisotropy (FA) values’ or ‘reduced white matter density’ when we refer to comparisons within patient groups. However, we do not agree with their argument that the naïve group’s fractional anisotropy integrity appears to be within the normal range of healthy male adolescents, with reference to Ashtari et al (2007). For the current study we used Voxel Based Morphometry (VBM) methods to discriminate between the FA voxel intensities on a voxel by voxel basis (Ashburner and Friston 2000). We refrained from calculating the mean FA values or extracting a tensor since we were interested in the whole brain response of our study sample. Therefore, our data cannot necessarily be compared with Ashtari et al 2007. Furthermore, Voxel Based Analysis (VBA) does not allow to generate responses about ‘normal ranges’ of FA values, it serves as a comparison of numerical values between 0 and 1 without a unit, with a higher FA value implying a higher degree of anisotropic motion of water molecules.

Fan and Hart argue that our title ‘cannabis use and callosal white matter structure and integrity in recent-onset schizophrenia’ would imply that there was an effect of cannabis on the onset of schizophrenia and brain abnormalities in the current participants, while our data did not demonstrate an effect of cannabis use. Indeed, we did not find an effect of cannabis use. However, in our opinion the title is neutral. The title captures two important topics in our article namely cannabis and the corpus callosum, and therefore informs the reader – at a single glance – what our article is about. We do hope and think, that casual readers who – at any chance – will misinterpret the findings of our study by only reading the title, will later be correctly informed about our results and conclusions by reading the abstract.

References


