

Marijuana can cause deadly damage to heart and arteries – study

As the debate continues to rage over the decriminalisation of marijuana and its use for medicinal purposes, the naysayers have received a boost from the findings of a study reported in the latest edition of the Journal of the American Heart Association.

According to the study, smoking marijuana can cause potentially lethal damage to the hearts and arteries of young and middle-aged adults. Researchers in France looked at data from the French Addictovigilance Network between 2006 and 2010. They identified 35 out of nearly 2,000 marijuana-users with known medical conditions linked to the heart and arteries in the brain or limbs. Twenty heart attacks were recorded, as well as 10 cases involving problems with arteries in the limbs, and three affecting blood vessels in the brain. Nine patients, more than a quarter of the total, died.

Most of the patients were male, with an average age of 34.3 years. “This result is consistent with previous findings and strengthens the idea that cannabis may be responsible for serious complications, in particular on the cardiovascular system,” the authors of the study noted. “Cannabis may trigger cardiovascular complications and therefore should be regarded as so by health practitioners and by users, who often admit the dangers of drugs like cocaine and amphetamines but minimize that of cannabis.” The scientists added that they suspect the number of cardiovascular-related health complications and deaths among marijuana users is actually much higher than the data suggests, since many incidences go unreported. “It’s also often difficult to detect which substance is linked to health problems, they say, with studies showing that people who use marijuana are also more likely to develop dependence on other drugs and alcohol. Lead scientist Dr Emilie Jouanjus, from the University of Toulouse, said: “The general public thinks marijuana is harmless, but information revealing the potential health dangers of marijuana use needs to be disseminated to the public, policy makers and healthcare providers. “This unexpected finding deserved to be further analysed, especially given that the medicinal use of marijuana has become more prevalent and some governments are legalising its use,” she said.