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Drugged Driving More Common Than Drunk Driving Among College Males

Male college students are much more likely to drive after smoking marijuana than to drive after drinking, a new study finds.

Researchers at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, found 44 percent of college men said they drove after smoking marijuana in the previous month, compared with 12 percent who said they drove after drinking.

"We definitely need to think about how to help students understand that marijuana is risky to use before you drive," lead author Jennifer Whitehill told HealthDay. "These are young, inexperienced drivers, and marijuana does increase crash risk."

The study found 9 percent of college women said they have driven after smoking marijuana, but 35 percent said they rode with a drugged driver.

The study, which appears in *JAMA Pediatrics*, found for every 1 percent increase in the number of friends who use marijuana, there is a 2 percent increase in the risk of riding with a driver who has been smoking marijuana.

The study included 315 students from two large state universities. Among males, 30 percent said they had used marijuana in the previous month, and 67 percent said they drank alcohol.

Among females, 13 percent said they used marijuana in the previous month, and 64 percent said they drank alcohol.

In an editorial accompanying the study, Mark Asbridge of Dalhousie University in Halifax, Canada, said there does not seem to be the same stigma for drugged driving that is associated with drunk driving. "We've got to think about the kind of techniques that were effective for drinking and driving and how they might be applied here," he said. He called for strict laws against driving under the influence, strong law enforcement efforts, and a public education campaign.