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Research on CBD: Informing Community Children's Health Decisions

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- Community health involves keeping the public informed on how to make safe and effective medical decisions. This is exactly what [Dr. Justin Cole](#), associate professor of [pharmacy](#) practice at [Cedarville University's School of Pharmacy](#), is pursuing with colleagues in a study on the effects of cannabidiol (CBD) products on children with mental health challenges.

Cole, along with [Dr. Aleda Chen](#), associate dean and professor of [pharmacy](#) practice, and two fourth-year [Doctor of Pharmacy](#) students, Katie Schwaller from Washington Township, Ohio, and Zach Krauss from Temple, Texas, sought to determine the impact of unlicensed CBD products on children struggling with anxiety, autism or ADHD.

"One of the trends we are seeing as pharmacists is the increase in use of unlicensed CBD products among parents of children with these disorders," said Cole. "Until now, nobody has quantified this. We wanted to put a number to this, as well as begin to understand their conceptualization of these products to hopefully inform safe medical decisions in the future."

In the survey-based research, [Cedarville's](#) team of pharmacy leaders and students found over 30% of parents have given, or are giving, an unlicensed CBD product to their children for anxiety or another neurodevelopmental disorder. Additionally, they found that parents doing so typically had favorable perceptions of these products and of perceived community support for their use on children.

"Parents are looking for answers to help their children with more pervasive challenges," said Cole. "They are looking to these unlicensed CBD products, despite signs of potential danger."

There are currently no CBD products approved by the [Food and Drug Administration](#) (FDA) for children with anxiety, autism or ADHD. As a result, CBD products being sold to parents are unregulated, regardless of legality.

"There's no truth in labeling for these products," said Cole. "In one study, 31% of these products are found to be accurate to what the label says. We don't always know what these kids are putting into their bodies. Furthermore, there is also a lack of efficacy data. These products might not be safe and aren't proven to work either."

An increasing safety concern is what makes informing the public so critical.

"We want parents to understand that these products could be a danger to their child's safety," said Cole. "In 2014, there were zero calls to poison control centers about kids taking CBD products. In 2021,

these numbers have increased to over 3,500. We want to spread the word about potential dangers so that parents are informed about these risks.”

Cole credits his two [Doctor of Pharmacy](#) students for their dedication to informing community health decisions.

“The students were instrumental in making this project a success,” mentioned Cole. “Katie (Schwaller) took the lead in this project, guiding us to a complete study. Zach (Krauss) contributed to the development of our parent survey, gathering key data for our findings. Without them, this would not have gone so smoothly. This is one of the many ways they demonstrate the talent God has given them.”

The study has already been presented at the Pediatric Pharmacy Association’s conference in September and American College of Clinical Pharmacy conference in October. The full study will be published by the Journal of Pediatric Pharmacology and Therapeutics this summer.

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 5,082 [undergraduate](#), [graduate](#), and [dual-enrolled](#) high school students in more than 175 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is one of the largest private universities in Ohio, recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, including the [Doctor of Pharmacy](#) program, high graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings, and the #4 national ranking by the Wall Street Journal for student engagement. For more information about the University, visit cedarville.edu.

Written by Alex Boesch

Photo caption:

2- Dr. Justin Cole has completed important research on the effects of cannabidiol (CBD) products on children with mental health challenges.

Photos by Scott Huck, Cedarville University.