

Cannabidiol: knowledge and perceptions of society

Abigail Calleja, Janis Vella Szijj, Anthony Serracino-Inglott

Department of Pharmacy, Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, University of Malta, Msida, Malta

Introduction

Cannabidiol (CBD) and tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) are cannabinoids found in the cannabis plant. Research and marketing efforts about the use of CBD increased the public's interest and knowledge about its use. ^{1,2}

Aims

To assess the knowledge and perception of the general public about CBD.

Method

A questionnaire, consisting of 4 sections (Figure 1), was developed, electronically and in paper format. It targeted the knowledge and perception of the general public about CBD.

- Validation was carried out through discussion with a panel of 7 experts consisting of 3 pharmacists, 1 general practitioner, 1 physiotherapist and 2 lay persons
- Ethics approval was sought prior to dissemination
- Recruitment of participants was carried out by means of convenience sampling
- Dissemination was carried out online through social media and by randomly recruiting participants attending pharmacies
- Data analysis was carried out using IBM SPSS software version 28

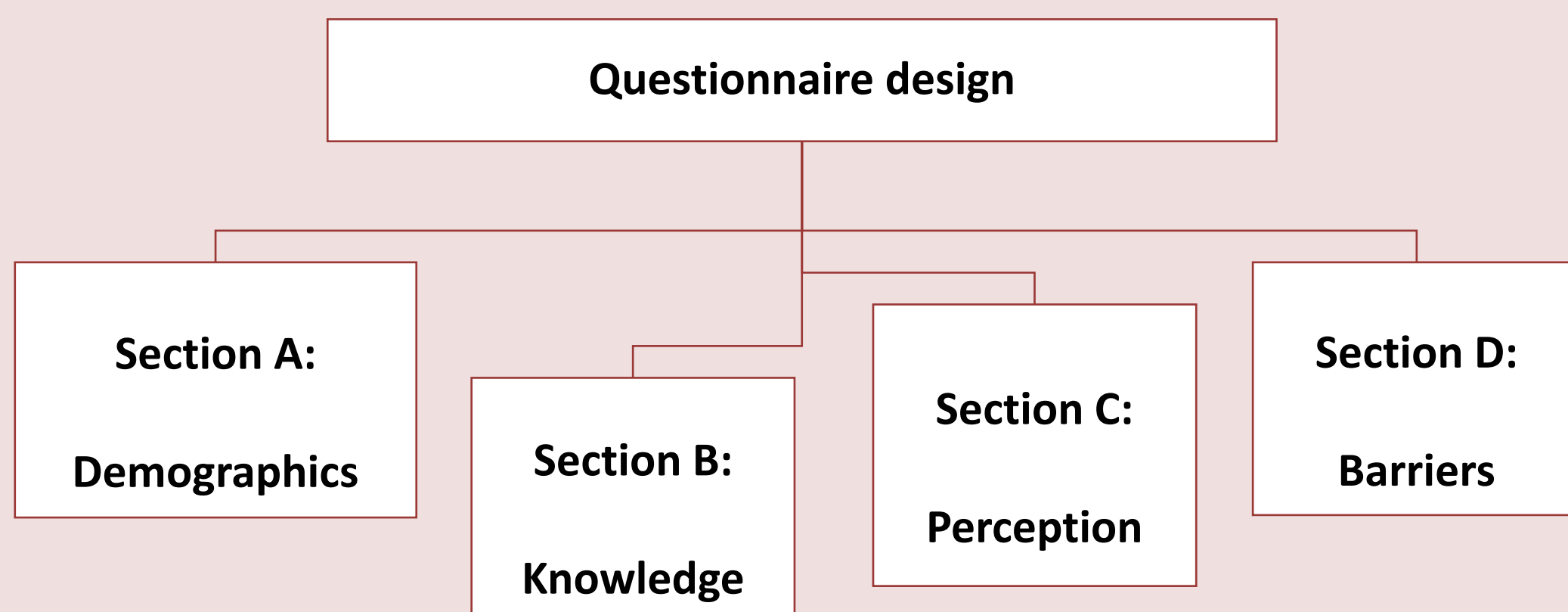


Figure 1 Questionnaire design

Results

- Four hundred individuals (62% female, 41% aged 26-40 years, 42% had a tertiary level of education) answered the questionnaire
- Seventy-five percent (n=257) heard about CBD from social media/news
- Table 1 and 2 demonstrate the potential therapeutic effects and side effects of CBD according to the participants

Table 1 Potential therapeutic effects (N=400)

Potential therapeutic effects	Percentage of participants
Analgesic	79%
Anxiolytic	76%

Table 2 Potential side effects (N=400)

Potential side effects	Percentage of participants
Sedation / Drowsiness	45%
No side effects	8%
Not knowledgeable	3.8%

- Eighty-five percent (n=342) of the participants believe that CBD products should be accessible in Malta for medicinal use and 50% (n=202) believe that CBD products should be prescription-only-medicine
- Seventy-seven percent (n=306) agree that CBD products recommended or prescribed by a healthcare professional are more likely to be used by patients
- Sixty-nine percent (n=277) of the participants disagree that CBD is a gateway drug

Figure 2 demonstrates that social stigma associated with the use of CBD for medicinal use would pose as the highest potential barrier

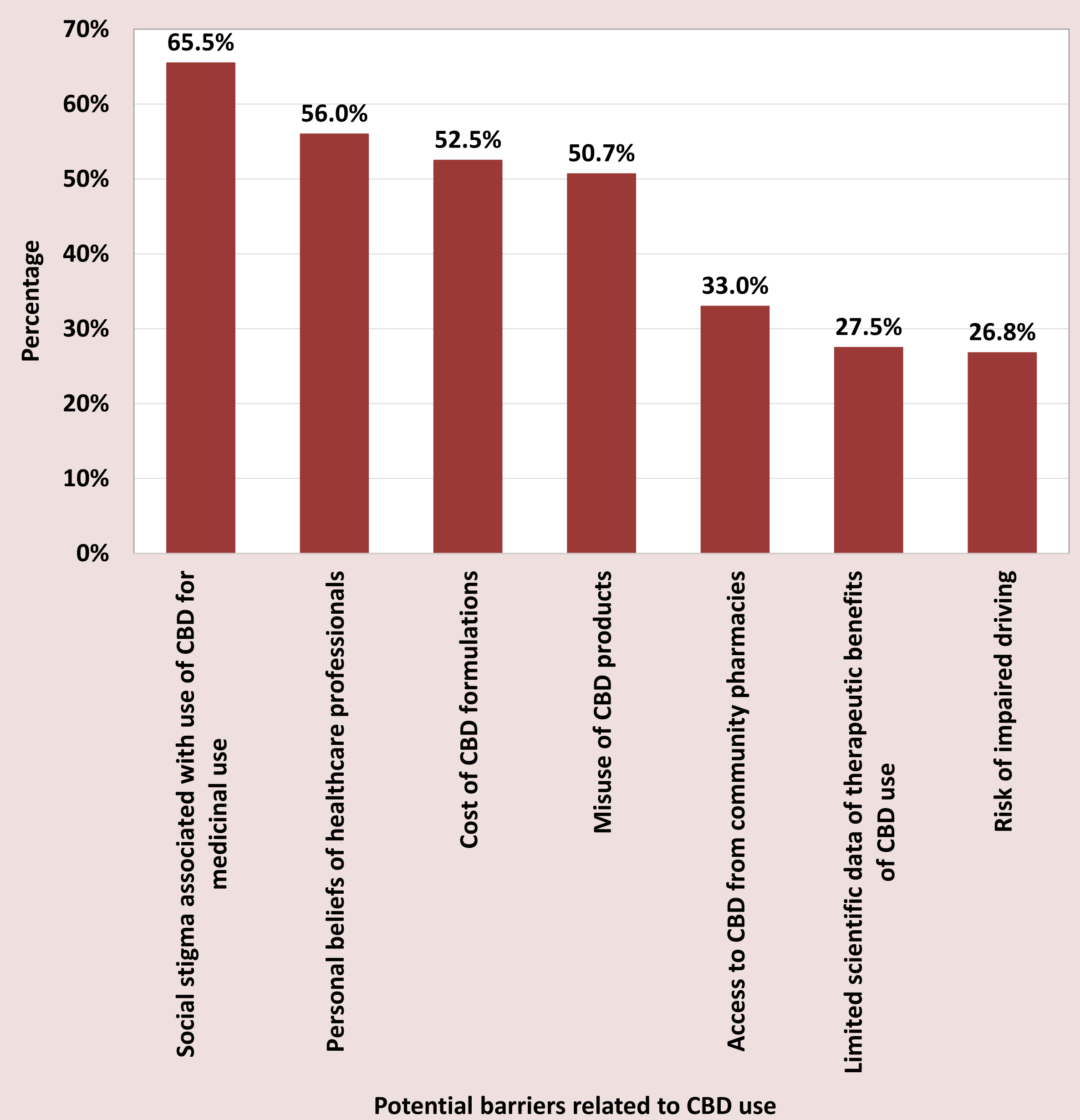


Figure 2 Potential barriers related to CBD use (N=400)

Conclusion

Participants were aware and knowledgeable about CBD, however there is a lack of knowledge among the public with regards to the side effects caused by CBD. Awareness and education about the potential side effects caused by CBD products is proposed. The majority of the participants believe that CBD has an analgesic effect, yet there is currently no approved CBD medicinal product indicated for painful conditions on the market. Social stigma might potentially be a barrier related to CBD use but healthcare professionals might be at an ideal position to reduce or prevent this potential barrier. Further research investigating the participants' experience with the use of CBD is proposed.

References

1. Corroon J, Phillips JA. A Cross-Sectional Study of Cannabidiol Users. *Cannabis and Cannabinoid Research*. 2018;3(1):152–61. doi: 10.1089/can.2018.0006
2. Leszko M, Meenrajan S. Attitudes, beliefs, and changing trends of cannabidiol (CBD) oil use among caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer's disease. *Complementary Therapies in Medicine*. 2021;57:102660. doi: 10.1016/j.ctim.2021.102660

Email: abigail.m.calleja.14@um.edu.mt
Contact number: +356 79991996