Candidate Research Presentation

Gregory Leung
Ph.D. Candidate, University of Kansas

“The Impact of Medical Marijuana Laws on College Students’ Mental Health, Drugs Substitutability, and Academic Outcomes,”

As of October 2019, 33 states and the District of Columbia have passed medical marijuana laws (MMLs). To the author’s knowledge, there are no studies of the impact of marijuana laws on college students’ mental health and only a few have examined their impact on students’ academic outcomes. In this paper, I use restricted data from the Healthy Mind Study Questionnaires (HMS) from 2009 to 2017. I exploit the variation in marijuana laws and estimate the effect of marijuana legalization on students’ psychological well-being, changes in psychiatric prescription and recreational drug use, as well as the academic outcomes. While some states recognize the effectiveness of marijuana for medicinal purposes and the potential tax revenue gained from recreational marijuana sales, it is equally important to study the unintended consequences on public health. The results in this paper show that with legal access to medical marijuana, there is no evidence on changes in students’ mental health. Yet, I find strong evidence of substitutability between medical marijuana and prescription drug use, as prescription drug use decreases by 9 percent following the passage of MMLs. In addition, while no association is found on behavioral changes on alcohol and cigarette consumption, recreational drug use of marijuana and cocaine have gone down by 1 to 5 percent post legalization. It is suggestive that prior to MMLs, there had been self medication involved among students. Lastly, MMLs are associated with better academic performance among college students. A potential mechanism could be medical cannabis is offering a better symptom control with fewer side effects than traditional prescription drugs which could be hindering students’ ability to study and excel academically in the past. This study sheds light on the relationships among medical marijuana legalization, mental stability, drug use behaviors, and academic performance within the young adult population within a college environment.

Download complete paper at:
www.sjsu.edu/economics/events/candidate/index.html

Learn more about candidate:
https://gregoryleungeconomics.wordpress.com

Monday, February 3rd
IRC 210
10:30am-12:00pm

All faculty, staff, and students are welcome!