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## **Higher Than Expected: Reported THC% on Retail Flower vs. Observed is Inflated**

**Presenter: Anna Schwabe, PhD, Director of Research & Development, 420 Organics**

**Abstract:** Cannabis products sold in the United States are required to report total THC % by dry weight on packaging. However, concerns have been raised that reported THC values are inaccurate. Research shows that THC potency is a primary factor in determining price, so it has an outsized role in the marketplace. Reports of inflated THC% and “lab shopping” have been circulating for some time, but a side-by-side investigation of reported potency and flower in the package has not previously been conducted. We analyzed THC in 23 samples from 10 dispensaries in Colorado and compared the results to THC reported on the packaging. The average observed THC was 14.98 +/- 2.23%, which is substantially lower than recent reports summarizing dispensary reported THC, and was 23.1% and 35.6% lower than the lowest and highest label reported values, respectively. Approximately 70% were more than 15% lower than the THC% reported on the label, with three samples having only one half of the reported maximum THC%. Although the exact source of the discrepancies is difficult to determine, a lack of standardized testing protocols, limited regulatory oversight, and financial incentives to market high THC likely plays a significant role. Given our results, it is urgent that steps are taken to increase label accuracy of Cannabis being sold to the public. The lack of accurate reporting of THC potency can have impacts on medical patients controlling dosage, recreational consumers expecting an effect aligned with price, and trust in the industry as a whole.