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CANNABINOID CHRONICLES

Medical Cannabis News and Information

Cannabis Associated with Fewer Opioid-Related Deaths

On average, US states allowing the medical use of cannabis have lower rates of deaths resulting from opioid analgesic overdoses than states without such laws. Opioid analgesics, such as OxyContin, Percocet and Vicodin, are prescribed for moderate to severe pain, and work by suppressing a person's perception of pain.

A new multi-institutional study, published in *JAMA Internal Medicine* and led by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania, examined the rate of deaths caused by opioid overdoses between 1999 and 2010. Results reveal that on average, the 13 states allowing the use of medical cannabis had a 24.8% lower annual opioid overdose mortality rate after the laws were enacted than states without the laws, indicating that the alternative treatment may be safer for patients suffering from chronic pain related to cancer and other conditions.

Approximately 60% of all deaths resulting from opioid analgesic overdoses occur in patients who have legitimate prescriptions. Additionally, the proportion of patients in the US who are prescribed opioids for non-cancer pain has almost doubled over the past decade, indicating the need to do a more focused examination on the safety and efficacy of these and other treatment options.

While noting that evidence for the pain-relieving properties of cannabis is limited, some studies have suggested "it may provide relief for some individuals," said lead author, Marcus A. Bachhuber, MD. "In addition, people already taking opioids for pain may supplement with medical marijuana and be able to lower their painkiller dose, thus lowering their risk of

overdose. Additional results of the study show that the relationship between lower opioid overdose deaths and medical cannabis laws strengthened over time; deaths were nearly 20% lower in the first year after a state's law was implemented, and 33.7% lower five years after implementation. While safer treatment of chronic pain may help to explain lower rates of overdose deaths, medical cannabis laws may also change the way people misuse or abuse opioid painkillers, as cannabis and opioids stimulate similar areas in the brain's pathways. The authors suggest that as more states implement medical cannabis laws, future studies should examine the association between such laws and opioid overdoses to confirm their findings.

Sources: www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/08/140825185315.htm



International Association for Cannabinoid Medicines (IACM) Bulletin

CBD increase susceptibility to destruction of lung cancer cells by immune cells

New research demonstrates that cannabinoids increase the concentration of ICAM-1, a protein on the surface of lung cancer cells, and this was responsible for increased cancer cell susceptibility to destruction of these cells by so-called activated killer cells, a form of immune cells. Authors concluded that “these findings provide proof for a novel antitumorigenic* mechanism of cannabinoids.”

* - *servicing to counteract the formation of tumors*

Source: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25069049>

Vaporized cannabis safe and effective in the treatment of neuropathic pain

A significant reduction in pain intensity was achieved after cannabis inhalation with a vaporizer in 8 patients suffering from chronic neuropathic pain. This is the result of an open study by Israeli researchers published in the Journal of Pain and Palliative Care Pharmacotherapy. The objective of the study was to explore the pharmacokinetics, safety, tolerability, efficacy, and ease of use of the Syqe Inhaler, a novel portable thermal-metered-dose inhaler for cannabis. The patients were on a stable analgesic regimen including medicinal cannabis. They received one dose of 15 mg THC in cannabis. Mean maximum THC plasma concentration was 38 ng/mL, which was achieved on average after 3 minutes. Mean reduction in pain intensity was 45% and noted 20 minutes after inhalation, turning back to baseline within 90 minutes. Tolerable light-headedness, lasting 15-30 minutes and requiring no intervention, was the only reported adverse event.

Source: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25118789>

Cannabis is used to cope with social anxiety

In a study with 123 cannabis users it was found that a major reason to use the drug is to manage social forms of anxiety.

Department of Psychology, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, USA.

Source: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25196146>

Handbook of Cannabis now available

The *Handbook of Cannabis* edited by Roger Pertwee and published by Oxford University Press is now available. It has 768 pages and in 49 chapters includes all issues on pharmacology, adverse effects and therapeutic potential of cannabis and cannabinoids and on the endocannabinoid system written by eminent researchers in the field. Considered the best ever published book on this issue (\$150 US).

Source: <http://global.oup.com/academic/product/handbook-of-cannabis-9780199662685?cc=us&lang=en&>

THC may be detectable in blood up to 16 days after last cannabis use

16 days after last cannabis use, the THC-levels of 28% of patients, who were treated in several hospitals in Germany, were still above 1 nanogram per millilitre (ng/mL) in blood serum. This is the result of research published in the journal Drug and Alcohol Dependence by researchers in Essen, Germany.

Scientists included 39 treatment-seeking chronic cannabis dependents in the study. They were studied on admission and on abstinent days 2, 4, 8 and 16.

Withdrawal symptoms peaked on day 4. Women had significantly stronger symptoms than men. The serum levels of THC-OH declined most rapidly below detection limit, on median at day 4. At abstinence day 16, the THC-levels of 28% of the patients were still above 1ng/ml (range: 1.3 to 6.4ng/mL). Researchers concluded that “residual THC was found in the serum of almost one-third of the patients at abstinence day 16.”

Source: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25127704>

Cannabidiol improves dilation of arteries in rats

Cannabidiol (CBD) enhanced the maximum relaxation of blood vessels to acetylcholine in arteries in rats with diabetes. This effect was at least partly mediated by the CB2 receptor. CBD enhanced the production of a blood vessel dilating substance derived from cyclooxygenase. University of Nottingham, UK.

Source: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25212218>

Sativex did not reduce driving ability

In a study with 33 MS patients, who received Sativex for the treatment of spasticity, the cannabis extract did not reduce driving ability. Authors wrote that “patients showed comparable driving test results at baseline and at final visits. Only two patients changed classification shifting from 'unfit' to drive to 'fit' and vice versa.” MS-Zentrum, Kaltenkirchen/Holstein, Germany.

Source: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25208898>

Palmitoylethanolamide is an effective anti-inflammatory agent for inflammatory bowel diseases

The endocannabinoid palmitoylethanolamide, which was injected into the belly or given orally attenuated inflammation of the colon, which was induced by a chemical. This effect was mediated by the CB2 receptor, the GPR55 and the PPAR-Alpha, and modulated by vanilloid receptors. Department of Pharmacy, University of Naples Federico II, Italy.

Source: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25205418>

For more info visit: www.cannabis-med.org/

Cannabis prevents negative effects of traumatic events

Scientists at the University of Haifa have discovered that administering synthetic cannabis (cannabinoids) soon after a traumatic event can prevent PTSD-like (post-traumatic stress disorder) symptoms in rats, caused by the trauma and by trauma reminders. PTSD is an anxiety disorder that can develop after an individual has experienced or witnessed a major trauma.

According to the Israel Medical Association approximately 9% of the population suffers from PTSD, whereas among at-risk populations such as combat soldiers, prisoners, victims of assault, etc., the percentages are even higher. A common phenomenon among those who suffer from trauma is that exposure to a "trauma reminder" - an event that is not traumatic in essence but that evokes the memory of the experience of the traumatic event - can further heighten the negative effects of the trauma. In this study, the researchers aimed to examine whether the use of cannabinoids may moderate the effects of trauma in cases of exposure to trauma reminders. From the findings it became clear that the rats that were injected with the cannabinoid substance showed no PTSD symptoms such as impaired extinction learning, increased startle response, changes in sensitivity to pain and impaired plasticity in the brain's reward center (the nucleus accumbens), compared to those not injected with the drug. "The findings of our study suggest that the connectivity within the brain's fear circuit changes following trauma, and the administration of cannabinoids prevents this change from happening. This study can lead to future trials in humans regarding possible ways to prevent the development of PTSD and anxiety disorders in response to a traumatic event."

Sources: www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/09/140904084252.htm



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Arizona and Cannabis Research

The call for increased research of cannabis for medical purposes gets louder every day, from governments to doctors to families. However, even in US states where medical cannabis is legal, getting research to actually happen can be a trying experience.

Dr. Sue Sisley couldn't have anticipated the difficulty of gaining approval to study whole plant cannabis and its effectiveness in treating military veterans with PTSD. Neither could she have foreseen being fired four years later just after the study had been approved to proceed. Four years ago, Dr. Sisley, a psychiatrist at the U. of Arizona, along with her private sponsor Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS), submitted a research study proposal to investigate whole plant cannabis and PTSD. Dr. Sisley mainly chose Arizona for her research due to the high number of war veterans in the state, whose groups have been in support. After several re-submissions, the study finally received approval last March. The next stage was to procure legal cannabis for her research, which, because cannabis is labelled as a Schedule 1 drug in the US (no medicinal value and very prone to abuse), is tightly controlled and only available from one federal agency. Sisley was informed that the supplier didn't have the strains the study needed and they would have to grow some more, delaying the study until at least early 2015.

Then, in June, Dr. Sisley was fired by the U of Arizona who cited funding and reorganization issues. Sisley, however, didn't see it that way: "They could never get comfortable with the idea of this controversial, high-profile research happening on campus."

Some scientists suggest that the rigid position taken by the Federal Department of Health and Human Services, where the future of cannabis-based medicine lies in isolated, synthesized chemicals, has put a pall on the research community. As a result, there are few rigorous studies underway in the US.

Dr. Sisley has taken her story out on the road. "I'm talking because this is a giant blow to scientific freedom and every story and report helps us shine a national spotlight to this injustice," she said. "I've been fighting this battle for four years and suddenly something like this happens."

Sisley said the tragedy is that her dismissal isn't based on job performance, but political pressure from the state's conservative Senate President Andy Biggs who accused her of being engaged in what he considered inappropriate political activity.

Sources: www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v14/n657/a09.html
AND www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v14/n593/a01.html

Visit our website at www.thevics.com

Less Domestic Violence Among Couples Who Use Cannabis

New research findings from a study of 634 couples found that the more often they smoked cannabis, the less likely they were to engage in domestic violence. "These findings suggest that marijuana use is predictive of lower levels of aggression towards one's partner in the following year," authors say.

The study attempted to clarify inconsistent findings about domestic violence among cannabis-smoking couples that primarily has been based on cross-sectional data (i.e., data from one point in time). Looking at couples over the first nine years of marriage, the study found:

- More frequent cannabis use by husbands and wives (two-to-three times per month or more often) predicted less frequent intimate partner violence (IPV) perpetration by husbands.
- Husbands' cannabis use also predicted less frequent IPV perpetration by wives.
- Couples in which both spouses used cannabis frequently reported the least frequent IPV perpetration.
- The relationship between cannabis use and reduced partner violence was most evident among women who did not have histories of prior antisocial behavior.

"These findings suggest that marijuana use is predictive of lower levels of aggression towards one's partner in the following year." lead investigator Kenneth Leonard, PhD, says. "It is possible, for example, that - similar to a drinking partnership - couples who use marijuana together may share similar values and social circles, and it is this similarity that is responsible for reducing the likelihood of conflict."


Further research to replicate results and examine day-to-day marijuana and alcohol use is hoped for.

Sources: www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/08/140826141134.htm

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**"Live all you can - it's a mistake not to. It doesn't so much matter what you do in particular,
so long as you have your life. If you haven't had that, what *have* you had? "**

-- Henry James, American writer (1903)