

Review

Therapeutic Use of Cannabis and Cannabinoids

A Review

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Abstract

Importance Approximately 27% of adults in the US and Canada report having ever used cannabis for medical purposes. An estimated 10.5% of the US population reports using cannabidiol (CBD), a chemical compound extracted from cannabis that does not have psychoactive effects, for therapeutic purposes.

Observations Conditions for which cannabinoids have approval from the US Food and Drug Administration include HIV/AIDS-related anorexia, chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting, certain pediatric seizure disorders. A meta-analysis of randomized clinical trials reported a small but

alizapride, chlorpromazine; standardized mean difference [SMD], -0.29 [95% CI, -0.39 to -0.18]). A meta-analysis of randomized clinical trials among patients with HIV/AIDS reported that cannabinoids had a moderate effect on increasing body weight compared with placebo (SMD, 0.57 [95% CI, 0.22 to 0.92]). Evidence-based guidelines do not recommend the use of inhaled or high-potency cannabis ($\geq 10\%$ or 10 mg $\Delta 9$ -tetrahydrocannabinol [$\Delta 9$ -THC]) for medical purposes. High-potency cannabis compared with low-potency cannabis use is associated with increased risk of psychotic symptoms (12.4% vs 7.1%) and generalized anxiety disorder (19.1% vs 11.6%). A meta-analysis of observational studies reported that 29% of individuals who used cannabis for medical purposes met criteria for cannabis use disorder. Daily inhaled cannabis use compared with nondaily use was associated with an increased risk of coronary heart disease (2.0% vs 0.9%), myocardial infarction (1.7% vs 1.3%), and stroke (2.6% vs 1.0%). Evidence from randomized clinical trials does not support the use of cannabis or cannabinoids for most conditions for which it is promoted, such as acute pain and insomnia. Before considering cannabis or cannabinoids for medical use, clinicians should consult applicable institutional, state, and national regulations; evaluate for drug-drug interactions; and assess for contraindications (eg, pregnancy) or conditions in which risks likely outweigh benefits (eg, schizophrenia or ischemic heart disease). For patients using cannabis or cannabinoids for treatment of medical conditions, clinicians should discuss harm reduction strategies, including avoiding concurrent use with alcohol or other central nervous system depressants such as benzodiazepines, using the lowest effective dose, and avoiding use when driving or operating machinery.

Conclusions and Relevance Evidence is insufficient for the use of cannabis or cannabinoids for most medical indications. Clear guidance from clinicians is essential to support safe, evidence-based decision-making. Clinicians should weigh benefits against risks when engaging patients in informed discussions about cannabis or cannabinoid use.

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