



Cannabis Use in Headache Treatment: A Literature Review

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Introduction

Headaches are classified in various ways and have significant global prevalence, affecting millions of people, impacting their quality of life and daily productivity. Although a variety of therapeutic approaches have been developed over the years, some remain insufficient in terms of effectiveness and tolerance, which induces patients to seek alternatives for pain relief. In this scenario, cannabis, a plant that has been used for millennia for medicinal purposes, emerges as a promising candidate in headache treatment. Cannabis is known for its active compounds, cannabinoids, which include delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD). These compounds interact with the body's endocannabinoid system, which plays an important role in pain and inflammation regulation. This complex interaction between cannabinoids and the endocannabinoid system has intrigued researchers and led to a series of clinical and preclinical studies on the use of cannabis in headache treatment.

Objective

to review the scientific literature in order to analyze the use of cannabis in headache relief.

Methodology

this is a bibliographic research conducted on the EMBASE and MEDLINE databases using descriptors such as headache disorders, medical marijuana, headache treatment, cannabis treatment and their combinations. Original articles published in English between 2018 and 2023 relevant to the study's objective were used. Five studies were selected for this review.

Results

the use of cannabis for headache treatment is considered promising due to a convergence of data. Analyses emphasize the beneficial short- and long-term effects of medicinal cannabis in treatment. It has shown efficacy in reducing dependence on analgesics, pain intensity, and daily use of these medications. Patients have reported prolonged improvements in their physical and mental health with continuous use of medicinal cannabis, especially for managing chronic pain and mental health issues. However, it is important to note that repeated use may lead to tolerance, although it does not appear to cause medication overuse headache as seen with other conventional treatments.

Nevertheless, the lack of updated evidence, considering that cannabis contains a wide range of pharmacological and biochemical compounds, many of which are not fully understood, due to the lack of studies on this subject and the restrictive social convention it carries, coupled with the lack of professional training and uniform guidelines, has led some healthcare professionals to hesitate in recommending medicinal cannabis.

Conclusion

while there is a growing interest in cannabis as a treatment for headaches, controlled clinical trials are essential to confirm efficacy, determine optimal dosages, and understand possible long-term effects. The field of medicinal cannabis continues to evolve, promising more personalized and effective treatments for patients with chronic pain and headaches.

Palavras-chave: Headache disorders; Medical marijuana; Headache treatment.