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Use of cannabis in severe childhood epilepsy and child protection considerations

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The use of medical cannabis in chronic illness is increasingly investigated, yet little is known about its use in paediatric populations. As child protection clinicians are often asked to provide advice around whether parents' actions to give medical cannabis to their chronically ill child constitutes harm or risk of harm, a review of the evidence base is required. This systematic review explores the use of cannabis-derived products in children with seizure disorders. While a reduction in seizure activity was observed in some children, included studies were poorly designed and too small to extrapolate reliable conclusions about clinical use. Due to the lack of high-quality evidence, the use of cannabis-derived products is currently not recommended in children with seizure disorders. However, in assessing risk and harm to subject children by child protection physicians in Australia with existing State and Territory legislation, evaluation must occur on a case-to-case basis with each instance considered on its individual merits. Clinical trials addressing drug efficacy and long-term safety of cannabis-derived products are required.

Biography

Megan Yap was awarded her Fellowship to the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (Paediatrics) in 2014. She is a General Paediatric Physician with a special interest in developmental paediatrics and infant development. Dr Yap's experience includes work at the Lady Cilento Children's Hospital, Brisbane's Mater Children's, Royal Children's and Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospitals. She has also worked at the Temple Street Children's University Hospital in Dublin. Prior to obtaining her Bachelor of Medicine/Bachelor of Surgery through University of Queensland, she completed a Bachelor of Pharmacy as class valedictorian and worked as a pharmacist. She currently works in private practice at "Paeds in a Pod" at Greenslopes Hospital in Brisbane, as well as a Staff Specialist and Lead Community Developmental Paediatrician publicly, at Ipswich General Hospital and continues with her appointment with the Lady Cilento Children's Hospital Child Protection and Forensic Medical Unit (all in Queensland Australia). In her life outside of work she keeps busy with trips to the beach with her husband and two children aged 2 and 4 years and her children's health, lifestyle and cooking blog "Dr Megs - Paeds & Feeds."

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