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Cannabis and cannabis derivatives in low back pain management in the geriatric population

Background: Cannabis is emerging as a treatment for pain, but little in-depth research has been conducted since cannabis was just recently approved as a treatment. Due to the prevalence of low back pain (LBP) in aging populations, pharmaceutical cannabinoids have emerged as a possible treatment, although not without controversies.

Objective: To assess the role of cannabis in the management of LBP.

Methods: This article compiles global data related to the role of cannabis in the management and treatment of LBP in the aging population. A literature review was conducted based on the Cochrane Collaboration - Systematic Reviews of Health Promotion and Public Health Interventions Handbook guidelines, using predetermined keywords, inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Results: Through the analysis of studies, data supporting and rejecting the use of cannabis in LBP treatment was made available so informed decisions can be made when choosing optimal management plan. Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the active ingredient in cannabis which plays a role in supressing acute, chronic, and neuropathic pain and can be used to manage malignant and non-malignant pain. Studies have found both significant, and insignificant decreases in lower back pain due to the use of cannabis. Similarly, studies reported contradicting evidence on the impact of cannabis to anxiety, and insomnia, both noted to be common comorbid LBP conditions.

Conclusion: Overall, cannabis appears to be an effective treatment of LBP, and should be considered when other treatment methods have failed. Cannabis use in LBP is increasing in prevalence in our aging population, and should be researched further.

Biography

Helen Senderovich is a physician at Baycrest Health Science System with practice focused on Palliative Care, Pain Medicine and Geriatrics. She is an Assistant professor at the Department of Family and Community Medicine, and Division of Palliative Care at the University of Toronto who actively involved teaching medical students and residents. She has a broad international experience and a solid research background. Her research was accepted nationally and internationally. She is an author of multiple manuscripts focused on geriatrics, patient's centered care, ethical and legal aspect of doctor patient relationship, palliative and end-of-life care.

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