



AAN 71st ANNUAL MEETING ABSTRACT

Abstract Title: Multiple Sclerosis and Use of Medical Cannabis: A Retrospective Review Evaluating Symptom Outcomes

Objective: The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of medical cannabis in improving symptomatology in patients diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS). We also sought to collect data on other pertinent outcomes related to the use of cannabis to enhance understanding of the potential benefits this complementary therapy offers.

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Background: Although medical cannabis is approved in 30 states and the District of Columbia for use in multiple sclerosis there remains a dearth of research clinically evaluating its effectiveness and patient experience.

Design/Methods: A retrospective chart review of 77 patients diagnosed with multiple sclerosis participating in treatment with medical cannabis for symptom management was conducted (F=53, M=24, Mean Age=49±12). A variety of objective and subjective variables that pertain to alleviation of MS symptoms were collected from each of the first four appointments following initiation of medical cannabis. A cross-sectional review of self-rating scales completed by patients was also conducted to determine gross changes in mental health.

Results: Subjective improvement endorsed by patients was extensive, with alleviation of symptomatology seen most in pain (71%), spasticity (43%), and sleep (42%). In addition, 34% of patients were able to decrease and discontinue other medications including opioids, stimulants, and benzodiazepines (McNemar test for symmetry; $p < 0.001$), indicative of symptom improvement. Medical cannabis was also well-tolerated within the multiple sclerosis patient population. The most common adverse reaction observed was somnolence (6%). No significant weight change was noted over 335 day average duration of therapy. A low rate of discontinuation (14%) was observed, most frequently due to cost (36%) and lack of efficacy (36%).

Conclusions: Patients with multiple sclerosis who initiated medical cannabis treatment experienced improved symptomatology with good tolerability and were able to decrease or altogether discontinue opioids, stimulants and benzodiazepines. Further controlled studies are needed to confirm and clarify these results.

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