



AAN 73st ANNUAL MEETING ABSTRACT

Abstract title: The Use of Medical Cannabis in the Treatment Comorbid Anxiety and Depression

Objective: To evaluate the efficacy and adverse effects of medical cannabis in the treatment of anxiety and depression.

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Background: According to the National Institute of Mental Health, anxiety and depression affect the American adult population at rates of 19.1% and 7.1%, respectively. Incidence rates of anxiety and depression is highest amongst females at 23.4% & 8.7% respectively as compared to males at 14.3% & 5.3% respectively. With medical cannabis (MC) legal in 33 states, MC may present as a treatment option for patients with anxiety and/or depression.

Design/methods: This retrospective chart analysis was conducted on patients with comorbid anxiety and depression as diagnosed by a board-certified neurologist in a neurologic outpatient setting in New York State. Patients were certified to use MC as part of New York State's Medical Marijuana Program.

Results: 101 (82=female, 19=male) patients aged 23-87 years with anxiety and depression medicating with benzodiazepines and selective serotonin/norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SSRI/SNRIs) were included in this analysis. Symptomatic benefit was appreciated in 88.12% (n=89) on MC treatment, with 23.76% reporting improvement in anxiety (n=24) and 2.97% reporting improvement in depression (n=3). Benzodiazepine usage was reduced in 42.57%, with 13.86% discontinuing. SSRI/SNRI usage was reduced in 20.79%, with 18.81% discontinuing. These results were most commonly achieved using one MC product (69.31%), with 75.25% of patients utilizing sublingual administration via tincture. The ratios most commonly associated with positive outcomes were 20:1 and 1:1 (THC:CBD) products. Only 22.77% (n=23) of the population reported side effects with the most common being somnolence (2.97%). One patient discontinued as a result of side effect and no serious AEs were reported.

Conclusion: MC is well-tolerated in patients with comorbid anxiety and depression, and may play a role in one's ability to reduce benzodiazepine and/or SSRI/SNRI medication consumption. Efficacy and medication reduction was most often exhibited in those using 20:1 and 1:1 (THC:CBD) ratios. Further investigations, including randomized placebo-controlled trials are needed to confirm these results.

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