

Study in Canada Finds Cannabis Use For Pain Reduces Opiate Use

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98682, VANCOUVER, CANADA, August 24, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Pain. Chronic. Acute. Disabling. Mild. Pain is a difficult condition to manage regardless of whether it's intense and of a long-duration or mild and short in duration. For decades, people have turned to the pharmaceutical industry to find relief from pain. Keep reading to learn more about opiate use for pain and how a naturally occurring plant, cannabis, can be used for pain in place of opiates, which carry very dangerous, sometimes fatal, side effects.

What Are Opiates?

Opioids (also known as opiates) are substances that interact with the body's opioid receptors to produce effects that are similar to morphine's. In the medical setting, opioids are used for pain relief and even intensive measures, such as anaesthesia. Opioids are highly addictive substances and are derived from the poppy plant.

What is the Opioid Crisis in Canada?

Opiates are often the front line of medical treatment for patients who suffer from pain. Within the last couple of decades, the expanding [use of opioids in Canada has led to epidemic-like numbers of deaths](#) from overdose. These deaths result from diverted, prescribed, illegal, and the more powerful, synthetic opiates combined.

[Medical Marijuana](#) Offers Alternative Pain Relief

No one has ever died from a cannabis overdose. That's reality. Know what else is reality? The fact



Logo for Naked Cannabis Canada



Canadian Study Shows Medical Marijuana Helps Reduce Opioid Use for Pain Control

that in 2020, an average of 17 Canadians died from an opioid-related death. Those numbers are sobering. No wonder so many Canadians, and people worldwide, are reaching for medical marijuana as a safer alternative to super-addicting and often fatal opiates.

Medical studies, such as this one from 2017, “Cannabis as a Substitute for Opioid-Based Pain Medication: Patient Self-Report” have shown that cannabis is a safe alternative to opioids for the relief of pain. This study took place out of the United States, but in the abstract, it’s clearly stated that:

“Cannabis can be an effective treatment for pain, greatly reduces the chance of dependence, and eliminates the risk of fatal overdose compared to opioid-based medications. Medical cannabis patients report that cannabis is just as effective, if not more, than opioid-based medications for pain.”

Does Medical Marijuana Decrease Opiate Use?

While not the first of its kind, another Canadian study shows a correlation between the medical use of cannabis and a reduction in the use of opioids. In this recent study, the use of cannabis and opiates among patients with chronic pain that had legally prescribed opiates in the home was evaluated. The name of this study is “Opioid use in medical cannabis authorization for adult patients from 2013 to 2018: Alberta, Canada,” and it was published in the journal BMC Public Health.

The background statement of the study also pointed out that over-prescription and the widespread dispersion of opioid medications have led to the epidemic of abuse and misuse being seen in both the United States and Canada. As a result of the opioid epidemic, many patients who suffer from chronic pain and even physicians keen on more natural alternatives are looking at options other than opioid painkillers. Therefore, there is an increased focus on studying alternative options to opiates, such as medical marijuana. According to the authors of the study:

“An increasing body of literature suggests that medical cannabis may decrease chronic pain, be a potential substitute for opioids and act as a contender for decreasing patients’ opioid usage. Known as the ‘opioid-sparing effect,’ recent studies have emphasized the analgesic properties of medical cannabis—and that concomitant use with cannabis may potentially show a significant reduction in overall reliance of opioid usage—and consequently, lead to an improved quality of life.”

How the Research Was Conducted

In order to find out the relationship between cannabis and opioid consumption, the researchers focused on the relationship between these two things. The investigators of this study carefully analysed the opioid consumption and medical marijuana use of more than 5,300 patients who were all chronic opiate users and had prescriptions for opioid painkillers. Some of these patients were receiving cannabis prescribed by a doctor and some of these test subjects were using

cannabis without being under the care of a physician. They evaluated the subjects' weekly amount of opioid consumption, measured by the oral morphine equivalent (OME). They looked at data from 26 weeks before and 52 weeks after medical cannabis authorization.

What Were the Results?

What did the study conclude? The biggest reduction in opioid painkiller use was observed in the medical marijuana patients on high doses. Some results were mixed when it came to short-term use of opioids, but those with a medical cannabis authorization reduced their intake of opioid painkillers much more than the matched control groups. The researchers concluded that:

"This short-term study found that medical cannabis authorization showed intermediate effects on opioid use, which was dependent on initial opioid use. Greater observations of changes in OME appear to be in those patients who were on a high dosage of opioids (OME > 100); however, continued surveillance of patients utilizing both opioids and medical cannabis is warranted by clinicians to understand the long-term potential benefits and any harms of ongoing use."

If you would like to learn more about the history of medical marijuana use, read our previous blog post on the topic, [here](#).

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