

# Study Shows Medical Cannabis Use Reduces Opioid Prescriptions in Patients with Osteoarthritis

PHILADELPHIA,, PA, UNITED STATES, February 12, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A recent peer-reviewed study finds medical cannabis offers significant promise for managing osteoarthritis pain, potentially helping curb the opioid crisis.

Osteoarthritis can result in significant pain, requiring pain management with opioids. A study co-authored by a team of Philadelphia-area researchers finds that medical cannabis can significantly reduce opioid prescriptions and improve pain management in patients with osteoarthritis, offering a promising alternative approach to traditional pain management strategies.

“Our findings indicate that providing access to medical cannabis helps patients with chronic pain due to osteoarthritis reduce their levels of opioid usage in addition to improving pain and quality of life,” according to Dr. Asif Ilyas, MD, co-author of the study. He is President of the Rothman Opioid Foundation in Philadelphia, a Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery at Thomas Jefferson University, and an Associate Dean of Clinical Research at the Drexel University College of Medicine in Pennsylvania.

The study, *Medical Cannabis Use Reduces Opioid Prescriptions in Patients With Osteoarthritis*, highlights the potential benefits of medical cannabis in addressing opioid dependency, a major public health concern. The study appears in the January 2022 issue of *The Cureus Journal of Medical Science*, a peer-reviewed journal. Additional study authors were Bryan Renslo, MD, Ari Greis, DO, Conan S Liu, MD, Anjithaa Radakrishnan, MD, of the Department of Medical Cannabis and Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia, USA.

“Patients with chronic pain due to osteoarthritis who were certified for medical cannabis filled significantly fewer opioid prescriptions post-medical cannabis certification compared to pre-medical cannabis certification. More than one-third of patients stopped filling opioid prescriptions altogether. Pain and quality of life measures were also improved following medical cannabis certification,” explained Ilyas.

This study focused on the association between medical cannabis use and opioid utilization for the management of chronic pain in 40 patients due to osteoarthritis.

Medical cannabis is a new therapeutic option for chronic pain. As of 2020, it has been approved for the treatment of pain in over 30 states across the US.

Medical cannabis has been shown to treat chronic noncancer pain, neuropathic pain, and multiple sclerosis-related spasticity's and is generally well-tolerated and safe to use. Medical cannabis has also been shown to be effective in treating orthopaedic pain compared to a placebo; however, studies have yet to show efficacy compared to an active comparator. There are limited studies into the use of medical cannabis for the management of chronic pain caused by musculoskeletal etiologies such as osteoarthritis, in part due to hesitancy from physicians to prescribe it.

Based on the findings, the introduction of medical cannabis for patients with low levels of opioid utilization has a high chance of decreasing opioid utilization and even eliminating the need for opioid medications to control their pain altogether.

"Our findings suggest that medical cannabis should be considered for patients with chronic pain due to osteoarthritis to decrease opioid use. Moreover, because medical cannabis has a superior safety profile and minimizes the risk of potentially fatal overdose, medical cannabis can also be considered a viable option before initiating opioid prescriptions," says Ilyas.

The findings support the literature in that medical cannabis reduces the use of opioids for the treatment of chronic pain.

About the Rothman Orthopaedic Institute Foundation for Opioid Research and Education.

The Rothman Orthopaedic Institute Foundation for Opioid Research & Education is a non-profit 501c3 organization dedicated to raising awareness of the risks and benefits of opioids, educating physicians and policymakers on safe opioid use, and supporting research and education aimed to advance innovative pain management strategies that can decrease opioid use. The Rothman Orthopaedic Institute Opioid Foundation supports and advances the highest quality research on opioids and alternative pain modalities to yield findings that can better inform patients, physicians, and the greater healthcare community in the most evidenced-based pain management strategies.

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