Medical cannabis linked to lower opioid use for intractable pain

Source: ***Ann Pharmacother***
Curated by: ***Liz Scherer***
September 13, 2019

Takeaway

- Using medical cannabis may reduce average daily milligram morphine equivalent (MME) doses in patients with intractable pain.
- More research is needed to confirm opioid-sparing effects, effect on diazepines.

Why this matters

- Although more research is needed, pain clinicians might wish to consider medical cannabis treatment in the setting of chronic intractable pain to reduce overall opioid burden.

Key results

- 77 eligible for inclusion; 58.4% (n=45) women; average age, 54 years.
- At baseline, average daily MME, diazepine equivalents (DE) were 140.64±184.64 mg, 18.33±10.84 mg, respectively.
- Median daily MME, DE were 105 (interquartile range [IQR], 43.75-155.63) mg, 17.5 (IQR, 8.13-28.13) mg, respectively.
- Statistically significant decline in median MME observed from baseline to 3 months (−32.5 mg; P=.013), baseline to 6 months (−39.1 mg; P=.001).
- Nonsignificant decline seen in median DE at 3 months (−3.75 mg; P=.285), no change at 6 months (−0 mg; P=.833).
- Significance remained for MME even when patients taking >500 MMEs were excluded (3 months: −34.29 mg [P=.035]; 6 months: −34.29 mg [P=.004]).

Study design

- Single-center, retrospective 6-month cohort study evaluating influence of medical cannabis on daily opioids, benzodiazapines for intractable pain.
- Funding: None.

Limitations

- Retrospective.
- Small sample.
- Dose equivalency tables ambiguity.
- Limited generalizability.

View Abstract

Topics: **Clinical Essentials, Family Medicine (Pain), Internal Medicine (Pain), Neurology (Pain)**

RELATED

Practice Changers: 5 crucial updates for family medicine in July
July 17, 2018

Chronic noncancer pain: does medical pot live up to the hype?
July 10, 2018 - *Lancet Public Health*

Chronic pain: heavy medical cannabis use tied to worsened pain
September 26, 2019 - *J Pain*

NEXT QUIZ QUESTION

Are you up to date? Test your knowledge on the latest clinical evidence.

QUIZ

The perils of too much sleep