Medical Cannabis in the Treatment of Patients with Autism Spectrum Disorder (1648)

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Objective: Evaluate efficacy and safety of medical cannabis (MC) for pain and epilepsy in patients with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Background: MC is approved for treatment of ASD in 14 states (not NY). In NY it is approved for epilepsy and pain. Common challenges with ASD include aggression, self-injurious behavior (SIB), elopement, pain, and epilepsy. Some individuals can also have severe behavior symptoms. Most of these patients try multiple medications with concerning side effects (SE). This study reports a case series of patients with ASD treated with MC.


Results:

1. Patients with epilepsy had improvement in seizure frequency (p =0.0032) and severity (p=0.0332).

2. Patients with pain had improvement in degree of overall pain (p<0.0001).

3. Autism/Caregiver Global Impression of Change (ACGIC) scale revealed improvement in all areas (p<0.0001): quality of life, activity limitations, symptoms, and mood.

4. Secondary effects: patients experienced improvement in sleep (p<0.0001), mood (p<0.0001), and aggression towards self and/or others (p<0.0001). Improvement was also seen in patient communication abilities (p=0.0001) and attention/concentration (p=0.0002).

5. Each patient tried an average of 6.4 other medications. 50% of patients discontinued or reduced the use of other medications.
6. 3 patients reported mild adverse SE from MC; no SE caused discontinuation of MC.

**Conclusions:** There is a paucity of research on the use of MC treatment with ASD. This study supports previous research for MC treatment of pain and epilepsy while exploring indications for behavioral issues and QOL improvement in ASD patients.

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**Disputes & Debates: Rapid online correspondence**

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ABSTRACT

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