

New Study Examines 'Brain's Own Marijuana'

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A researcher at the University at Buffalo's Research Institute on Addictions (RIA) is investigating the "brain's own marijuana" -- called endocannabinoid -- in the regulation of stress, stress-related behavior and anxiety.

A five-year, \$1.7 million grant from the National Institute of Mental Health is supporting this investigation.

"It is widely accepted that one of the major reasons that people use and abuse marijuana is to relieve stress," according to Samir Haj-Dahmane, Ph.D., neuroscientist and principal investigator on the RIA study.

"However, because marijuana can be addictive, it cannot be used to treat stress-related mood disorders such as anxiety. An alternative strategy may be to directly target the 'brain's own marijuana.'"

The success of such a strategy requires a better understanding of how endocannabinoid moderates stress-related behaviors and how stress and stress hormones activate the endocannabinoid system.

Haj-Dahmane and his co-investigator, Troy Wood, Ph.D., will examine the relationships between stress, stress-related behavior and addiction using a combination of electrophysiological, pharmacological and neurochemical approaches. They believe this study also may lay the foundation for better pharmacotherapy for stress-related mood disorders. Wood is an associate professor in the Department of Chemistry in UB's College of Arts and Sciences.

Source: University at Buffalo

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