

The body's own 'marijuana' is good for the skin

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Scientists from Hungary, Germany and the U.K. have discovered that our own body not only makes chemical compounds similar to the active ingredient in marijuana (THC), but these play an important part in maintaining healthy skin. This finding on "endocannabinoids" just published online in, and scheduled for the October 2008 print issue of, *The FASEB Journal* could lead to new drugs that treat skin conditions ranging from acne to dry skin, and even skin-related tumors.

"Our preclinical data encourage one to explore whether endocannabinoid system-acting agents can be exploited in the management of common skin disorders," said Tamás Biró, MD, PhD, a senior scientist involved in the research. "It is also suggested that these agents can be efficiently applied locally to the skin in the form of a cream."

Biró and colleagues came to this conclusion by treating cell cultures from human sebaceous glands (the glands that make the oil on our skin) with various concentrations of endocannabinoids (substances produced by the body that are similar to the active ingredient in marijuana).

Then they measured the production of lipids (fat cells, such as those in skin oil), cell survival and death, and changes in gene expression and compared these outcomes to those in an untreated control group.

"This research shows that we may have something in common with the marijuana plant," said Gerald Weissmann, MD. "Just as THC is believed to protect the marijuana plants from pathogens, our own cannabinoids

may be necessary for us to maintain healthy skin and to protect us from pathogens ."

Source: Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology

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