

Drug offers new pain management therapy for diabetics

October 30 2012

A study from the University of Calgary's Hotchkiss Brain Institute shows there is evidence to support a new drug therapy called nabilone to treat diabetic neuropathy, or nerve pain. Researchers enrolled 60 patients with diabetic neuropathy in a 12-week placebo controlled clinical study. At the end of the study, patients reported less pain and an improvement in sleep and anxiety when taking nabilone as compared to the placebo.

"This is a good option to help treat [nerve pain](#) due to diabetes, with very few side effects," says Dr. Cory Toth, a neurologist and the study's lead researcher. Toth is a member of the University of Calgary's Hotchkiss Brain Institute, Department of Clinical Neurosciences and is the research director of the Calgary Chronic Pain Centre Clinic.

The medication used in the study has the generic name nabilone, and is currently used in Canada to treat nausea in [chemotherapy patients](#). This study gives doctors more evidence to support its prescription for treating neuropathy pain in diabetics. Nabilone is a synthetic [cannabinoid](#), which mimics some of the chemical compounds of cannabis, or marijuana. It is approved for use by Health Canada and the FDA.

"This study is a further demonstration of the potential medical benefits of cannabinoids in a difficult pain condition. Dr. Toth and his team have conducted a solid trial which, although small, validates our clinical experience. This study gives physicians support to consider further options in treating this devastating chronic pain disorder," says Dr. Mark Ware, Associate Professor at the McGill University Health Centre.

[Type 2 diabetes](#) is exploding at epidemic rates over the world, and Canada is no exception. Recent studies show that type 2 diabetes is present in close to 10 per cent of Canadian adults and growing at faster than predicted rates.

[Diabetic neuropathy](#) is damage caused to the nerves, which results in numbness, tingling, burning and pain. About half of all diabetics suffer from diabetic neuropathy, and about half of this group experiences extreme pain, sleep disturbances, and difficulties walking.

Leslie Bonenfant knows firsthand the pain associated with diabetic neuropathy. She was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes five years ago. Having participated in the study, she experienced positive results, "My pain was so severe that I could barely walk a block. After taking nabilone I can manage my pain and I can function day to day," she says.

The study was published in the October issue of the medical journal *Pain*.

Provided by University of Calgary

Citation: Drug offers new pain management therapy for diabetics (2012, October 30) retrieved 20 March 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-10-drug-pain-therapy-diabetics.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--