

Can smoking medical marijuana reduce PTSD symptoms?

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Clinical research from New Mexico supports a conclusion that smoking cannabis [marijuana] is associated with PTSD symptom reduction in some patients. The study, published in the newest special issue of Journal of Psychoactive Drugs, was mentioned in a presentation on the topic of medical marijuana to the New Mexico Legislative Health & Human Services Committee last November, and is now available from Routledge Journals with Free Access.

In 2009, New Mexico became the first state to authorize the use of [medical cannabis](#) for people with PTSD. Soon after the New Mexico PTSD regulation went into effect, one of the authors began receiving unsolicited phone calls from people asking to be evaluated as part of their application to the New Mexico Medical Cannabis Program. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to analyze data on PTSD symptoms collected during 80 psychiatric evaluations of [patients](#) applying.

The research, which took place from 2009 through 2011, involved patients who were pre-screened via telephone interviews. To be eligible for the study, participants must have met the following: the experience of and emotional response to a trauma that met the DSM-IV Criterion A for PTSD; the presence of several of the major symptoms in re-experiencing, avoidance, and hyperarousal of PTSD when not using [cannabis](#); significant relief of several major PTSD symptoms when using cannabis; and lack of any harm or problems in functioning resulting from cannabis use. Participants were measured using a CAPS method

approach. CAPS is an instrument in PTSD research that asks questions about the presence of traumatic experiences and the immediate emotional response to them, then establishes a rating of the frequency and intensity of symptoms on a scale of 0 to 4. Totals were then calculated.

The results indicated that patients in the sample reported an average of 75 percent reduction in all three areas of PTSD symptoms while using cannabis, yet further research is still called for by the researchers. "Many PTSD patients report symptom reduction with cannabis, and a clinical trial needs to be done to see what proportion and what kind of PTSD patients benefit, with either cannabis or the main active ingredients of cannabis," said Dr. George Greer, one of the researchers.

More information: The report, "PTSD Symptom Reports of Patients Evaluated for the New Mexico Medical Cannabis Program," is available online: www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02791072.2013.873843

Provided by Taylor & Francis

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