

Medical cannabis use in patients with chronic health issues linked to improvements in health-related quality of life

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Australian patients with chronic health issues prescribed medical cannabis showed significant improvements in overall health-related quality of life and fatigue in the first three months of use, along with improvements in anxiety, depression, and pain.

Interestingly, cannabis therapy did not seem to improve reported [sleep disturbances](#), according to a [study published](#) September 6, 2023 in the open-access journal *PLOS ONE* by Margaret-Ann Tait from the University of Sydney, Australia, and colleagues.

Since 2016 in Australia, medical cannabis has been approved for prescription to patients with [health conditions](#) unresponsive to other treatment. Tait and colleagues surveyed a group of Australians with [chronic health conditions](#) prescribed medical cannabis to better understand any changes in patient-reported outcomes following cannabis treatment in this population.

The authors used survey responses from 2,327 Australian patients with [chronic health issues](#) prescribed medical cannabis (THC and CBD dissolved in a medium-chain triglyceride (MCT) carrier oil between November 2020 and December 2021. Patients were surveyed about their self-reported health-related quality of life, pain, sleep, anxiety, and depression prior to beginning cannabis therapy, after two weeks of treatment, then once a month for three months.

Of the surveyed patients 63% were female, with an average age of 51 years (range 18–97 years). The most-reported conditions being treated were [chronic pain](#) (69%); insomnia (23%); anxiety (22%); and anxiety/depression (11%); half of patients were being treated for more than one condition.

Patients reported significant, clinically-meaningful improvements in health-related quality of life and fatigue measurements across the three

months surveyed. Patients also reported clinically meaningful reductions in pain and significant improvements for moderate-severe anxiety and depression. However, though many patients were prescribed cannabis for insomnia, there were no overall improvements in patient-reported sleep disturbance.

The authors did not measure adverse effects as part of the study, though 30 patients formally withdrew from the study due to "unwanted side effects." Regardless, these results suggest [medical cannabis](#) may be effective in helping manage previously-untreatable chronic conditions. The authors also note that more research and development of the cannabis oil products used in this study may be needed in order to successfully treat patients with insomnia and sleep disorders.

The authors add, "Within the first three months of medicinal cannabis therapy, participants reported improvements in their health-related quality of life, fatigue, and health conditions associated with [anxiety](#), depression, and pain."

More information: Health-related quality of life in patients accessing medicinal cannabis in Australia: The QUEST initiative results of a 3-month follow-up observational study, *PLoS ONE* (2023). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0290549](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0290549) , journals.plos.org/plosone/article/journal.pone.0290549

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