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Could medical cannabis be an effective treatment for Migraine? A literature Review

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Objective: This review is going to explore the potential use of Medical Cannabis in the treatment of Migraine

Introduction: Cannabis has been prescribed for headaches by physicians since the ancient Persians. Cannabis derived medications are currently used in the UK for neurological conditions such as Lennox-Gastaut syndrome and Multiple Sclerosis. The two main chemical components in cannabis are: Cannabidiol (CBD) and Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). Recent studies have shown that these increase the endocannabinoids level (lipid-based neurotransmitters which bind to cannabinoid receptors) within the body. The endocannabinoid system is involved in the mediation of the pharmacological effects of cannabis and pain-sensation. The purpose of this presentation is to evaluate whether medical cannabis (or cannabis derived medications) could be effective treatments for migraine. Migraine is a common, headache disorder of unknown etiology. Vasodilating agents such as nitric oxide is known to be able to trigger migraine attacks.

Discussion: Studies have shown that endocannabinoid system dysfunction may be present in chronic migraine. The main theory is that reduced levels of endocannabinoids lead to increased CGRP and Nitric Oxide (NO) production leading to migraine. This is backed up by the reduced levels of certain endocannabinoids in the CSF of people with chronic migraine compared to controls. People with chronic migraine have also been shown to have increased CGRP and NO production. In terms of human clinical trials, results so far have been promising. Primarily studies have been case-report in nature, but these have given intriguing results. Not only has cannabis been reported to be effective in the abortion of migraine attacks but there is some evidence that it reduces the frequency of migraine attacks as well.

Conclusion: Medical Cannabis appears to be a promising avenue for migraine treatment.

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