ANXIETY

Clinical Summary

by HARVEST MEDICINE | **2021**

Anxiety

Anxiety disorders are the most prevalent psychiatric disorders,[1] causing significant distress and impairment in function. In 2013, an estimated 3 million Canadian adults reported having a mood and/or anxiety disorder,[2] which highlights the importance of having an effective management strategy. While drugs (such as antidepressants) and psychotherapy form the backbone of anxiety treatment,[3] there is evidence suggesting that medical cannabis (MC) may also have a role. In fact, anxiety disorder is the top medical condition being treated at Harvest Medicine, with 87.49%, of 13017 patients, self-reporting that MC either very positively or positively impacted their quality of life (figure 1).[4] As MC is already playing a significant role in anxiety management, it would be worthwhile to discuss literature findings that detail the benefits and risks of MC use.

Evidence suggests that MC may have a role in the treatment of social anxiety disorder (SAD).

This is demonstrated by the results of a study, in which treatment-naïve patients with social anxiety disorder (SAD) were randomized to receive either 600mg of CBD or placebo prior to a public speaking test.[5] Compared to the placebo, CBD reduced anxiety, cognitive impairment, discomfort, and arousal to levels comparable to those of the healthy controls.[5] This positive impact on anxiety is corroborated by another study, in which 400mg of oral CBD was associated with lower anxiety scores compared to placebo in treatment-naïve male patients with SAD.[6] The results of these studies show that medical cannabis may be a promising treatment option for people with SAD.

MC may be an effective adjunct anxiolytic in patients already being treated with conventional therapy.

A retrospective chart review at a large Colorado-based mental health clinic identified patients with anxiety, who had added CBD to their usual treatment to either avoid or reduce psychiatric medication use.[7] 79.2% of them reported decreased anxiety scores within one month, which was maintained for the duration of their follow-up at the clinic.[7] Given the open label design of the study, the observed improvement in anxiety scores is not solely attributable to CBD. Nonetheless, this study shows that medical cannabis may be an effective adjunct therapy in patients that are wanting to reduce psychiatric medications due to intolerable side effects or suboptimal benefit.

Despite the overall positive effects on anxiety scores, medical cannabis still carries a risk of adverse effects. In a few patients, it caused fatigue, mild sedation, and worsening anxiety symptoms.[7] Also, it is contraindicated with psychosis, which is sometimes implicated in social anxiety.[8] Therefore, while medical cannabis may be an appealing treatment option for anxiety, thorough assessment and routine follow-up with an experienced healthcare professional should be part of the care plan.
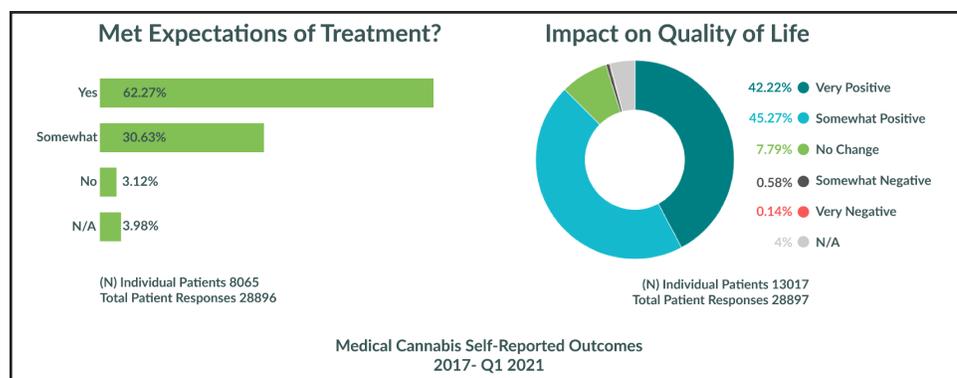
Met Expectations of Treatment?

- Yes 62.27%
- Somewhat 30.63%
- No 3.12%
- N/A 3.98%

(N) Individual Patients 8065
Total Patient Responses 28896

Impact on Quality of Life

- 42.22% Very Positive
- 45.27% Somewhat Positive
- 7.79% No Change
- 0.58% Somewhat Negative
- 0.14% Very Negative
- 4% N/A

(N) Individual Patients 13017
Total Patient Responses 28897

Medical Cannabis Self-Reported Outcomes
2017- Q1 2021

Figure 1 Harvest Medicine. (2021). Anxiety patient self-reported outcomes.[4]

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