



# ARTHRITIS

## Clinical Summary



HARVEST  
MEDICINE

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# Arthritis

Osteoarthritis (OA) is a progressive disease, in which the body fails to repair damaged joint tissues, eventually leading to the breakdown of joint cartilage and the underlying bone<sup>1</sup>. Approximately 3.9 million Canadians aged 20 years and older live with OA<sup>2</sup>, and the prevalence is projected to grow with the aging population<sup>3</sup>. Being a chronic pain condition, the current strategy largely focuses on pain management with analgesics and intraarticular glucocorticoid injections<sup>4</sup>. However, up to 60% of OA patients reported dissatisfaction with their current pain management<sup>5</sup>, which highlights the need for an alternative pain relief strategy.

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a progressive autoimmune disease, in which the immune system attacks and causes inflammation in the joints<sup>6</sup>. The current treatment focuses on delaying disease progression with disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs (DMARDs) and biologics, as well as glucocorticoids to reduce inflammation and analgesics to relieve pain<sup>7,8</sup>. Since pain is a significant element of the disease, it is important to have effective pain management strategies available for patients.

Medical cannabis (MC) may be an effective pain relief option for people with arthritis. A

prospective cohort study in adult patients with chronic non-cancer pain at 7 clinical centers across Canada showed that, at 1-year follow-up, patients who had been using cannabis as part of their pain management reported a significant reduction in average pain intensity (change = 0.92; 95% CI = 0.62 - 1.23) compared to the patient group who did not employ cannabis (change = 0.18, 95% CI = -0.13 to 0.49)<sup>9</sup>. In another study, patients using MC for chronic conditions reported that MC had quicker onset of action and longer-lasting effects compared to prescription medications<sup>10</sup>. Therefore, it appears that MC may be an alternative option for patients hoping for extra pain relief from arthritis.

While MC may effectively relieve pain in patients, it still carries a risk of side effects.

In literature, drowsiness, memory issue, cough, nausea, dizziness and intense excitement were certainly related to MC use<sup>9</sup>.

To mitigate these and other potential side effects, undergoing thorough assessment by a healthcare professional (HCP) and scheduling routine follow-up are important.

At Harvest Medicine, arthritis is one of the top 3 medical conditions that patients seek care for.<sup>11</sup> All patients undergo thorough assessment with HCPs to determine the most appropriate treatment course. The resulting patient outcomes have been very remarkable, with 80.34% of 7418 patients treating arthritis symptoms, self-reporting that MC has somewhat positively or very positively affected their quality of life (figure 1)<sup>11</sup>. With the incidence of arthritis on the rise, the role of specialized clinics, such as Harvest Medicine, in promoting and implementing safe MC use will become increasingly vital.

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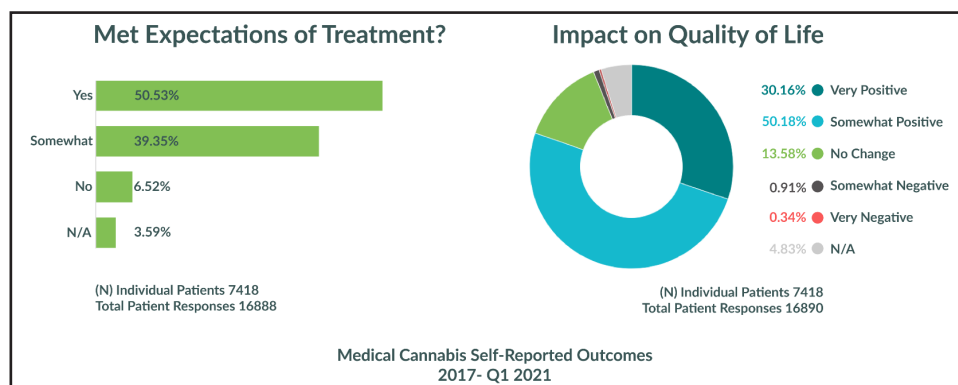


Figure 1 Harvest Medicine. (2021). Arthritis patient self-reported outcomes<sup>11</sup>



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