



# ARTHRITIS

## Clinical Summary

---



HARVEST  
MEDICINE

2021

# 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 different prescription medications<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 one's own healthy cells and causes inflammation in the joints<sup>6</sup>. The current treatment focuses on delaying disease progression, reducing inflammation, and relieving pain with different classes of prescription drugs<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 study in adult patients with chronic ( $\geq 6$  months) 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 compared to the patient group who did not employ cannabis<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 considered to be most likely or 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<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.

-Harvest Medicine 2021  
& Kang, A., University of Toronto  
Pharmacy Intern 2021

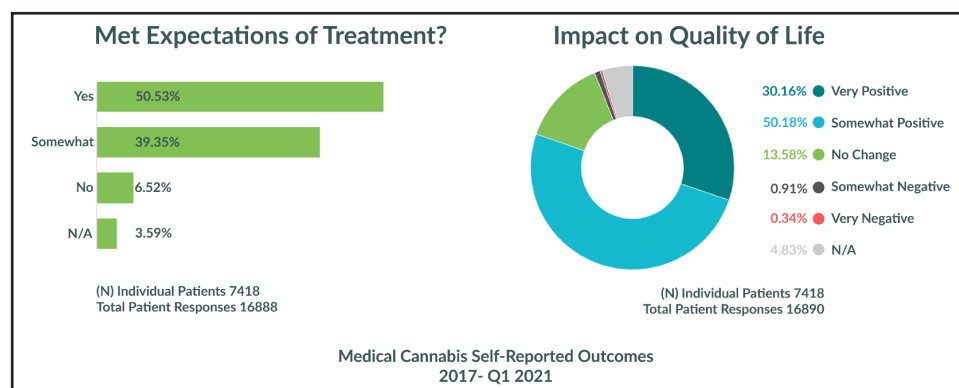


Figure 1 Harvest Medicine. (2021). Arthritis patient self-reported outcomes<sup>11</sup>



# References

1. Hochman, J. (2017, September). Osteoarthritis: Arthritis Society. Retrieved December 17, 2020, from [https://arthritis.ca/about-arthritis/arthritis-types-\(a-z\)/types/osteoarthritis](https://arthritis.ca/about-arthritis/arthritis-types-(a-z)/types/osteoarthritis)
2. Public Health Agency of Canada. (2020). Osteoarthritis in Canada. Retrieved December 17, 2020, from <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/osteoarthritis.html>
3. Birtwhistle, R., Morkem, R., Peat, G., Williamson, T., Green, M. E., Khan, S., & Jordan, K. P. (2015). Prevalence and management of osteoarthritis in primary care: an epidemiologic cohort study from the Canadian Primary Care Sentinel Surveillance Network. *CMAJ open*, 3(3), E270. [10.9778/cmajo.20150018](https://doi.org/10.9778/cmajo.20150018)
4. Kolasinski, S. L., Neogi, T., Hochberg, M. C., Oatis, C., Guyatt, G., Block, J., ... & Gellar, K. (2020). 2019 American College of Rheumatology/Arthritis Foundation guideline for the management of osteoarthritis of the hand, hip, and knee. *Arthritis & Rheumatology*, 72(2), 220-233. [10.1002/acr.24131](https://doi.org/10.1002/acr.24131)
5. O'Brien, M., & McDougall, J. J. (2018). Cannabis and joints: scientific evidence for the alleviation of osteoarthritis pain by cannabinoids. *Current opinion in pharmacology*, 40, 104-109. [10.1016/j.coph.2018.03.012](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.coph.2018.03.012)
6. Kuriya, B. (2017, September). Rheumatoid Arthritis: Arthritis Society. Retrieved December 17, 2020, from [https://arthritis.ca/about-arthritis/arthritis-types-\(a-z\)/types/rheumatoid-arthritis](https://arthritis.ca/about-arthritis/arthritis-types-(a-z)/types/rheumatoid-arthritis)
7. Singh, J. A., Saag, K. G., Bridges Jr, S. L., Akl, E. A., Bannuru, R. R., Sullivan, M. C., ... & Curtis, J. R. (2016). 2015 American College of Rheumatology guideline for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis. *Arthritis & rheumatology*, 68(1), 1-26. [10.1002/acr.22783](https://doi.org/10.1002/acr.22783)
8. Pazmino, S., Stouten, V., Verschueren, P., Mamouris, P., Westhovens, R., De Vlam, K., ... & De Cock, D. (2020). AB1153 Analgesic And Anti-inflammatory Drug Use in Patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis, Psoriatic Arthritis and Spondylarthritis versus Controls in a Belgian General Practitioner Registry. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/annrheumdis-2020-eular.3530>
9. Ware, M. A., Wang, T., Shapiro, S., Collet, J. P., Boulanger, A., Esdaile, J. M., ... & O'Connell, C. (2015). Cannabis for the management of pain: assessment of safety study (COMPASS). *The Journal of Pain*, 16(12), 1233-1242. [10.1016/j.jpain.2015.07.014](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpain.2015.07.014)
10. Hsiao, B., & Fraenkel, L. (2019). Patient preferences for rheumatoid arthritis treatment. *Current opinion in rheumatology*, 31(3), 256–263. <https://doi.org/10.1097/BOR.0000000000000591>
11. Harvest Medicine. (2021). Arthritis patient self-reported outcomes. Update retrieved, May 2021, from <https://hmed.ca/patient-outcomes/>

