Cannabis Among Adults With Chronic Pain: A Systematic Review

There is little scientific evidence to support whether plant-based cannabis preparation use is effective or safe for adults suffering from chronic pain, according to a recent CIVIC study.

The team of investigators, led by CIVIC HSR Fellow Dr. Shannon Nugent, found limited evidence that cannabis improves nerve pain and insufficient evidence that cannabis lessens pain in other pain populations such as patients with multiple sclerosis or cancer. In addition, the review found limited evidence suggesting cannabis usage among the general population is associated with an increased risk of psychotic symptoms and short-term detrimental effects on cognition. Despite this, surveys suggest that 45-80% of individuals interested in medical cannabis seek it to reduce pain.

A companion study, led by CIVIC scientist Dr. Maya O’Neil and published in the same issue of the Annals of Internal Medicine, examined cannabis for alleviating symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Likewise, they concluded there was insufficient evidence to determine whether cannabis use “is a marker for more severe symptoms or is effective at reducing symptoms, or whether the perceived beneficial effects are the result of cannabis, placebo effects, or the natural course of symptoms.”

With the rise of cannabis legalization and usage, the CIVIC scientists emphasize more rigorous studies are necessary to provide stronger evidence to draw conclusions about the effectiveness and safety of cannabis. So far, cannabis has been legalized for recreational purposes in nine states and the District of Columbia, and for medical use in 29 states.

Read more about Dr. Nugent’s study HERE & Dr. O’Neil’s study HERE
**Supported Employment for Veterans With Traumatic Brain Injury: Patient Perspectives**

Although unemployment is common among veterans with traumatic brain injury, these veterans rarely use services meant to assist with obtaining and maintaining a job, according to a recent study by CIVIC’s Dr. **Kathleen Carlson** and colleagues.

In a study published in the *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*, they note that approximately 45% of veterans in the study sample reported unemployment and nearly as many would be interested in using Supported Employment, an evidence-based vocational rehabilitation service, if offered. Nonetheless, just 12% of veterans had heard of Supported Employment and less than 1% had ever used it.

The Veterans Health Administration Compensated Work Therapy program provides a range of vocational rehabilitation services to veterans with disabilities.

**Veteran Patient Perspectives and Experiences During Implementation of a Patient-Centered Medical Home Model**

Can you benefit from something without being aware of it? In the case of veterans using a relatively new care model in the Veterans Health Administration, called the patient-centered medical home or PCMH, this may be the case, concluded CIVIC’s Dr. **Anais Tuepker** and colleagues.

In a qualitative study published in the *Journal of Patient Experience* the researchers found that veteran patients noticed recent changes in care such as improvement in communication and shorter clinic wait times. However, the majority of veterans did not attribute these outcomes to the PCMH initiative.

In addition, characteristics such as strong relationships with primary care providers and feeling cared for and respected by everyone encountered in care delivery had the greatest impact on veterans’ experiences. The authors note that the PCMH care delivery model aims to improves veterans’ care by fostering collaboration among healthcare providers to administer patient-driven and personalized care. They recommend incorporating patient perspectives into PCMH planning and implementation processes in order to continue improvement in this health care model.

*Read more about Dr. Carlson’s study [HERE](#)*

*Read more about Dr. Tuepker’s study [HERE](#)*
CIVIC Member Highlight: Beth Hooker, MS., MPH

Beth Hooker began working at CIVIC in September, 2017 as a biostatistician. Beth received her Master in Public Health in Epidemiology and Biostatistics from OHSU and a Master of Science in Conflict Resolution from Portland State University. Prior to joining the CIVIC team, she worked as a Research Associate for several years in OHSU’s School of Public Health. Beth is currently working on projects with Investigators Drs. Alan Teo, Sarah Ono, Linda Ganzini, Chris Slatore, and Lauren Denneson.

CIVIC Member Highlight: Julia Holloway, BS.

Julia Holloway has been working at CIVIC since the end of June, 2017 as a Research Assistant. Julia’s job for the Center includes duties such as assisting Dr. Travis Lovejoy, helping with core CIVIC administrative tasks, and assisting the hospital’s mental health division – she wears many hats! Julia recently graduated from Northeastern University in Boston with a BS in Biology. Julia ultimately hopes to become a Physician Assistant and stay involved in research throughout her career. Outside of work, you can find Julia exploring the outdoors, doing puzzles, or eating Thai Food.
Recent CIVIC Peer-Reviewed Publications


