

# Cannabis and Chronic Pain: Exploring Benefits, Risks and Legal Landscape

Marcosano Ludovic\*

Department of Anesthesia, University of Thessaly, 42100 Trikala, Greece

## Introduction

Cannabis has been used for centuries for medicinal purposes, particularly in managing pain. In recent years, there has been growing interest in its potential benefits for chronic pain management. However, alongside its potential benefits, there are also risks and legal considerations that must be carefully weighed. This article aims to delve into the complex relationship between cannabis and chronic pain, examining its benefits, risks and the legal landscape surrounding its use. Chronic pain, defined as pain lasting for more than three to six months, affects millions of people worldwide and can significantly impair quality of life. It can stem from various sources, including injury, inflammation, nerve damage, or underlying medical conditions such as arthritis or fibromyalgia. Traditional treatments for chronic pain often include medications like opioids, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, physical therapy and lifestyle modifications. However, these treatments may not always provide sufficient relief and can be associated with side effects and risks, particularly with long-term use [1].

## Description

Several studies have shown promising results regarding the effectiveness of cannabis in alleviating chronic pain. A meta-analysis published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) in 2015 found that cannabis-based medicines were associated with modest improvements in pain relief compared to placebo. Additionally, some patients report subjective improvements in pain severity and quality of life with cannabis use. Furthermore, cannabinoids may have anti-inflammatory effects, which could be beneficial for conditions characterized by inflammation-induced pain [2].

Despite its potential benefits, cannabis use for chronic pain management is not without risks. One of the primary concerns is the psychoactive effects of THC, which can impair cognitive function and motor skills, potentially affecting daily activities. Long-term use of cannabis may also be associated with dependence, addiction and withdrawal symptoms. Moreover, smoking cannabis can have adverse effects on respiratory health, similar to tobacco smoking. In the United States, for example, cannabis remains classified as a Schedule I controlled substance at the federal level, meaning it is deemed to have a high potential for abuse and no accepted medical use. However, individual states have enacted their own cannabis laws, with many allowing medical use under certain conditions. Patients must familiarize themselves with state-specific regulations and consult healthcare providers for guidance [3].

As we stand on the cusp of a new era in chronic pain research, the landscape is ripe with promise and possibility. From unraveling the mysteries of neuroinflammation to harnessing the gut-brain axis and advancing bioelectronic medicine, researchers are charting new frontiers in pain

\*Address for Correspondence: Marcosano Ludovic, Department of Anesthesia, University of Thessaly, 42100 Trikala, Greece; E-mail: ludvmrcsano.99@gmail.com

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management. By embracing innovation and collaboration, we can usher in a future where chronic pain no longer casts a shadow over the lives of millions, but instead, becomes a conquerable foe, subdued by the relentless pursuit of knowledge and compassion [4].

Healthcare professionals should conduct thorough assessments that consider the biological, psychological and social factors contributing to a woman's pain experience. Tailored treatment plans should address these multifaceted aspects of pain. Empowering women with knowledge about their pain conditions and treatment options can help them advocate for themselves within the healthcare system. Peer support groups and educational resources can also provide valuable support and information [5].

## Conclusion

Cannabis holds promise as a potential treatment option for chronic pain, offering analgesic effects with fewer risks of overdose compared to opioids. However, patients and healthcare providers must carefully consider both the benefits and risks of cannabis use, taking into account individual factors such as medical history, preferences and legal considerations. Further research is needed to better understand the efficacy, safety and optimal dosing of cannabis for chronic pain management. In the meantime, open communication between patients, healthcare providers and policymakers is essential for informed decision-making and safe access to cannabis-based therapies.

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## Conflict of Interest

None.

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