

Marijuana May Offer Benefits for Those With Head and Neck Cancer

Patients were less likely to experience pain and anxiety and more likely to have better quality of life.

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Cancer patients have been turning to marijuana to reduce chronic pain and manage chemotherapy-induced nausea for some time. Now, new research shows that using pot improves the overall quality of life for those with head and neck cancer, reports [Healio](#).

Researchers aimed to see whether marijuana was effective in managing pain and anxiety among people with cancers of the mouth, nose, larynx, lips, throat and salivary glands.

As a result, 148 participants who were diagnosed with head and neck cancer between 2011 and 2015 were recruited for the study. Half were patients who used marijuana; the other half did not.

Compared to non-marijuana smokers, those who used cannabis experienced less pain, greater appetite and better general well-being as well as less fatigue, anxiety, depression and drowsiness.

According to researchers, the most important takeaway of this study was that marijuana could help people feel less anxious about their cancer diagnosis while also treating cancer-related pain. (Marijuana use was associated with lower pain and anxiety scores.)

One limitation of the study is that scientists did not control the doses of those who used marijuana. Furthermore, cancer patients' quality of life was assessed only at the time of diagnosis and not throughout treatment.

"The use of marijuana for cancer pain is very much in its infancy, so we need more data," said Michael K. Gupta, MD, MSc, FRSC, an assistant professor in the division of otolaryngology and head and neck surgery at McMaster University in Ontario, Canada.

Gupta continued, "The next thing to do is a randomized controlled trial. We need to look at these patients and randomly assign them to a fixed dose of some cannabinoid agent and assess anxiety and pain scores."

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