

Treatment of Tourette syndrome with cannabinoids

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Cannabinoids have been used for hundred of years for medical purposes. To day, the cannabinoid delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and the cannabis extract nabiximols are approved for the treatment of nausea, anorexia and spasticity, respectively. In Tourette syndrome (TS) several anecdotal reports provided evidence that marijuana might be effective not only in the suppression of tics, but also in the treatment of associated behavioural problems. At the present time there are only two controlled trials available investigating the effect of THC in the treatment of TS. Using both self and examiner rating scales, in both studies a significant tic reduction could be observed after treatment with THC compared to placebo, without causing significant adverse effects. Available data about the effect of THC on obsessive-compulsive symptoms are inconsistent. According to a recent Cochrane review on the efficacy of cannabinoids in TS, definite conclusions cannot be drawn, because longer trials including a larger number of patients are missing. Notwithstanding this appraisal, by many experts THC is recommended for the treatment of TS in adult patients, when first line treatments failed to improve the tics. In treatment resistant adult patients, therefore, treatment with THC should be taken into consideration.