

News

Chronic Pain Given as Top Reason for Using Medical Marijuana

Other reasons cited in a newly-published study include stiffness and chemotherapy-related nausea

By *Carla K. Johnson*
AP Medical Writer

Chronic pain is the most common reason people give when they enroll in state-approved medical marijuana programs.

That's followed by stiffness from multiple sclerosis and chemotherapy-related nausea, according to an analysis of 15 states published Monday in the journal *Health Affairs*.

The study didn't measure whether marijuana actually helped anyone with their problems, but the patients' reasons match up with what's known about the science of marijuana and its chemical components.

"The majority of patients for whom we have

data are using cannabis for reasons where the science is the strongest," said lead author Kevin Boehnke of University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

California became the first state to allow medical use of marijuana in 1996. More than 30 states now allow marijuana for dozens of health problems. Lists of allowable conditions vary by state, but in general, a doctor must certify a patient has an approved diagnosis.

While the U.S. government has approved medicines based on compounds found in the plant, it considers marijuana illegal and imposes limits on research. That's led to states allowing some diseases and symptoms where rigorous sci-

ence is lacking. Most of the evidence comes from studying pharmaceuticals based on marijuana ingredients, not from studies of smoked marijuana or edible forms.

Dementia and glaucoma, for example, are conditions where marijuana hasn't proved valuable, but some states include them. Many states allow Parkinson's disease or post-traumatic stress disorder where evidence is limited.

The analysis is based on 2016 data from the 15 states that reported the reasons given for using marijuana. Researchers compared the symptoms and conditions with a comprehensive review of the scientific evidence: a 2017 report from the National Academies of



AP PHOTO/CARLOS OSORIO, FILE

In this Oct. 2, 2018, file photo, a clerk reaches for a container of marijuana buds for a customer at Utopia Gardens, a medical marijuana dispensary in Detroit. Chronic pain is the most commonly cited reason people give when they enroll in state medical cannabis programs. A study published Feb. 4 in the journal *Health Affairs* looks at available data from states that allow marijuana for medical use.

Sciences, Engineering and Medicine.

About 85 percent of patients' reasons were supported by substantial or conclusive evidence in the National Academies report.

The study shows people are learning about the evidence for cannabis and its chemical components, said Ziva Cooper of University of California Los Angeles' Cannabis Research Initiative. Cooper served on

the National Academies report committee, but wasn't involved in the new study.

About two-thirds of the about 730,000 reasons were related to chronic pain, the study found. Patients could report more than one pain condition, so the figure may overestimate patient numbers.

Patients include 37-year-old Brandian Smith of Pana, Illinois, who qualifies because she has fibromyalgia.

On bad days, her muscles feel like they're being squeezed in a vise. She said she has stopped taking opioid painkillers because marijuana works better for her. She spends about \$300 a month at her marijuana dispensary.

"Cannabis is the first thing I've found that actually makes the pain go away and not leave me so high that I can't enjoy my day," Smith said.

See CANNABIS on page 11

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cont'd from pg 7

bodies of water were not only a place to rest and refresh but also a place where rituals were performed.

Architects who created these beautiful gardens,

like Ineni and Senenmut, who advised Queen Hatshepsut were celebrated and appreciated by their royal superiors.

Some of the most important and frequently illustrated plantings in the New Kingdom are mandrake, poppy, cornflower, water lily and papyrus. The fruit of the Mandrake, *Mandragora officinalum* L., smells sweet, induces sleep and was prized for its believed aphrodisiac properties. The poppy flower was used in wreaths and its seed and oil in cooking. The cornflower was used in garlands and embalming, and was believed to be a remedy for scorpion stings. Papyrus sedge, *Cyperus papyrus* L., was used for a variety of purposes such as boat making, food and writing materials. Water lilies, which are referred to in many books as lotuses were presented as offerings to the dead and in temples.

No expense was too great for the Pharaonic garden and plants were often imported from far away places. Queen Hatshepsut and her successor Tuthmosis III had incense trees of myrrh and frankincense brought in

for their gardens. Sacred trees like the sycamore, date palm and pomegranate were grown. Vegetables most commonly planted were onions, lettuce, garlic, cucumber, watermelon, chickpea and lentil. Barley was a staple crop, used for making bread and beer. Hemp, *Cannabis sativa* L., was used for making rope and flax, *Linum usitatissimum* L., with its beautiful blue flowers were used to make linen.

Although we can't visit the ancient Egyptian gardens, through text and illustration we get a glimpse of their grandeur. Greeks, Romans and many other societies around the world admire the gardening talents of the ancient Egyptians. Hopefully through this piece you do too.

To read more on this work check out my references:

The Garden in Ancient Egypt-Alix Wilkinson-1998

Egypt: Land of the Pharaohs Lost Civilizations - Lost Civilizations (series)-1992

Discovering Tutankhamun: From Howard Carter to DNA-Zahi Hawass

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