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Case Series of Fibromyalgia (FMS) Patients with Neuropathic Pain Improved with the sublingual cannabinoid Sativex

Authors:

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Abstract:

Background: We present the first ever case series of Fibromyalgia (FMS) patients with neuropathic pain improved with the sublingual cannabinoid Sativex .

Method:

Setting: University Teaching hospital outpatient clinics.

Subjects: 41 FMS patients with neuropathic pain referred from family physicians and rheumatologists. Patients were pre-screened with the DN4 questionnaire for neuropathic pain and algometry tender point measurements (American College of Rheumatology criteria). They were excluded if there was significant addiction risk or psychiatric comorbidity.

Outcome measures: Numerical rating scale for pain, Short-form McGill Pain Questionnaire, Pain Disability Index, Neuropathic Pain Scale, Pain Diagram, Fibromyalgia Impact Questionnaire. Some underwent Quantitative Sensory Testing (Medoc).

Interventions: 23 patients initiated on Nabilone did well with titrated higher doses. 4 did not tolerate Nabilone but responded to low dose Sativex (one spray in the evening and another before sleep; then titrated up to 4-6 sprays/day). 14 patients already on night-time Nabilone but too sedated to tolerate daytime use, responded well to the shorter-acting Sativex for daytime break-through pain. Concomitant medications and therapies were monitored. Treatment varied from one to 12 months.

Results: These patients improved significantly in most outcome measures. In several cases, the use of opioids and psychotropic medications were reduced or eliminated. No major adverse reaction, habituation or addictive behaviour developed. Quality of life, mood, functional capacity and sleep were also improved subjectively in patient diaries.

Conclusion: This ongoing study suggests that cannabinoids appear helpful in FMS patients with neuropathic pain. Further randomized controlled trials would be needed to validate this preliminary finding.