

# **CBD And Its Effects On Parkinson's Disease**

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For the last 10 years we have seen a rise in cannabis popularity and usage, be it for recreational or medical purposes. An increasing number of researches are being conducted, especially to test the medical claims concerning cannabis and its active chemical compounds. One of these compounds is cannabidiol or CBD for short. CBD is considered to have a wide scope of potential medical applications, one of these applications being that it helps with Parkinson's disease related symptoms.

## **CANNABIDIOL**

CBD is one of the hundred active cannabinoids found in cannabis, and it accounts for 40% of the plant extract. One of the main reasons CBD is being researched for medical properties is that, as opposed to the more popular cannabinoid THC, it isn't psychoactive. In layman's terms, CBD doesn't get you high, which is great for medical treatments, as they are preferred to have minimum side effects. Studies suggest, that even at high doses CBD is still well tolerated and safe. Some of the medical properties for which CBD is valued are the reduction of nausea, combating anxiety and depression, combating tumor and cancer cells and so on. Unfortunately, most of this evidence comes from animal testing, as there are very few studies that have been carried out on humans. Furthermore, CBD remains illegal in many parts of the world, which goes to show, that it is of vital importance to do more research about CBD and the effect it has on human health and illness.

## **PARKINSON'S DISEASE**

Parkinson's disease is a progressive, degenerative disorder of the central nervous system. It mainly affects the motor activity and gets worse over time. As it is a progressive disease, the symptoms generally come slowly over time. The symptoms can be divided into three groups: primary motor symptoms, secondary motor symptoms and nonmotor symptoms. Primary motor symptoms are the ones that start early in the disease, such as shaking, rigidity, slowness of movement and a difficulty with walking. These primary motor symptoms are collectively called parkinsonism. As the disease advances, other symptoms may take place, dementia being one of the most common.

Parkinson's disease in most people is idiopathic, meaning that it has no specific known cause. However, it is believed that the cause involves genetic and environmental factors. Although PD is considered a non-genetic disorder, 15% of people that have PD have a first-degree relative, that has the same disorder. As far as environmental factors are concerned, there seems to be a link between PD and pesticide exposure, head injuries and living in the country.

What PD does is that it affects the nerve cells (neurons) in a specific part of the brain, called the substantia nigra. Most of those neurons produce dopamine, a chemical, that acts as a neurotransmitter in the brain, which means that it sends signals to other nerve cells. There are five pathways with which the brain is connected and through which dopamine is sent, PD affects all of them. As Parkinson's disease progresses, the amount of dopamine produced by the brain decreases, leaving a person unable to control their movement (and other functions) normally. Except for nerve cells deterioration, Lewy bodies are another key pathological feature of Parkinson's disease. Lewy bodies are abnormal aggregates of proteins that develop in nerve cells and may be the cause of cell death.

There are currently over 10 million people diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, with males being more affected than females. The average life expectancy after diagnosis is between 7 and 14 years and there is no known cure for the disease. But, there are various medications, surgery and other methods, that can provide relief from the symptoms. One of these methods could be CBD.

## **CBD AND PARKINSON'S DISEASE**

A recent study, conducted by a team of researchers from Brazil, showed that daily treatment with cannabidiol improved the well-being and life quality of patients diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. Twenty-one patients were administered CBD in gelatin capsules over a period of 6 weeks. Three doses were administered: 300mg per day, 75mg per day and a placebo. Patients that improved the most, were the ones that received the 300mg dose. However, it must be noted, the treatment didn't affect the disease, only the symptoms, and the small size of the patient group may have limited the findings. On the other hand, animal studies suggest that cannabis compounds could slow the progression of PD and other neurodegenerative conditions.

It is safe to say, that CBD and other chemical compounds found in cannabis, as various studies have concluded, can alleviate a range of health problems, conditions, and deficiencies. Nevertheless, there is a lot more work to do in terms of research concerning CBD and the effects it has on human health. Parkinson's disease, unfortunately, serves as a reminder why this issue, as said before, is of great importance to public health care. We hope, that in the world of tomorrow, the human race will use all of its natural resources, which are available to everyone, to battle problems and illnesses in any way they come.