EASY AS CBD: A CANNABIDIOL PRIMER FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

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Abstract
The rising legalization of cannabis has received the attention of medical and mental health professionals. While cannabis provides symptom relief, it is not legal in all states. Recently, researchers have shifted focus from cannabis to cannabidiol (CBD), which offers a lot of the same relief. Much of the empirical research is geared toward basic science and neurologist, not psychologist and counseling professionals. Our goal is to provide mental health professionals need-to-know benefits and risks of CBD use and its relevance to their clinical work.

CBD Knowledge
Greenhalgh’s 2019 Survey
Have Your Patients Asked About CBD?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Efficacy</th>
<th>Safety</th>
<th>Legality</th>
<th>DNS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>65%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>8%</td>
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Patients Most Often Ask About
- Efficacy
- Safety
- Legality
- DNS

Clinicians Feel Equipped to Answer Questions
- No
- Yes

90% Yes

What is CBD?
What CBD is not:
- Not delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)
- Not psychoactive like THC

What CBD is:
- Cannabidiol (CBD)
- In its pure state, CBD is a crystalline solid that can be extracted from the cannabis plant
- Oral (e.g., capsule, dissolved in oil), intranasal (nasal spray), and topical (e.g., balms, lotion, gels)

Safety of CBD
- In a 2018 report commissioned by the World Health Organization, the Expert Committee on Drug Dependence stated, “To date, there is no evidence of recreational use of CBD or any public health-related problems associated with the use of pure (emphasis added) CBD” (p. 5)
- Some products marketed as pure CBD may not be pure
- Quality control problems, such as products containing incorrect (under- or over-labeled) levels of CBD
- Be aware of companies touting unsubstantiated claims
- Patients on typical doses (25-300mg) report dry mouth, fatigue, and appetite change

Legal component
- The Agricultural Act of 2018 legalized CBD
- Plants containing less than 0.3% of THC
- Fully legal in 36 (72%) states (CBD Legal States 2022, n.d.)
- Reference state-level policies
- CBD products that are not pure can produce drug test results positive for illicit substances (Dahlgren et al., 2020)

Neurological Functioning
- Anticonvulsant effects in disorders linked to frequent seizure activity (Patra et al., 2019; Perry, 2019)
- Only CBD product FDA approved for therapeutic use: Epidiolex
  - Lennox-Gastaut and Dravet syndromes (Devinsky et al., 2018)
- Tuberous sclerosis complex in patients ≥12 months (Corroon & Kight, 2018)

Is it Safe?

Focus on Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD)
- CBD taken prior to public speaking reduced self-reported anxiety post-speech (Bergamaschi et al., 2011)
- Similar levels of anxiety with daily doses of CBD and paroxetine (Masataka, 2019)
- No reduction in physiological symptoms of anxiety (Zuardi et al., 2017)
- Participants expect CBD to reduce anxiety (Altman et al., 2021; Spinella et al., 2021)

Anxiety
- 25-300mg/daily → reduction in sleep disturbance, nightmares, and self-reported PTSD symptoms (Elms et al., 2018; Shannon & Opila-Lehman, 2016)
  - Inconsistent daily dosage
- May not maintain its ability to decrease PTSD symptoms over time (Das et al., 2013)
- Single dose (300mg) prior to psychotherapy → no reduction in anxiety or discomfort during trauma recall (Bolsini et al., 2021)

Trauma Responses
- 300mg/daily → no improvement in quality of life improvements (Capano et al., 2020)
- 94% reported quality of life improvements
- No effect on heroin or cocaine cravings (Chye et al., 2019; Hurd et al., 2019)
- Fewer alcoholic drinks per day and less cannabis use days (Karoly et al., 2021)
- Decrease in sleep disturbances and anxiety symptoms in daily cannabis users (Navarrete et al., 2021)

Psychosis
- Animal studies show promising results, while human studies produce mixed results

Substance Use
- 15-60mg/daily → 53% of patients with chronic pain reduced or eliminated opioids (Capano et al., 2020)

References
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Conclusions
Thus far, CBD shows promising results for conditions involving anxiety, psychosis, and seizure activity, although research is quite limited. Its impact on other mental health conditions is unclear due to the lack of research attention. Organizations, such as the FDA, and clinicians stress the need for sound empirical human studies to understand the therapeutic potential of CBD.