



Marijuana and Dentistry

Aditi Jain^{1*}, Somyashree Patnaik² and Maliha Sobani³

¹Department of Conservative Dentistry and Endodontics, India

²BDS, RDS, MFDs RCS Edinburgh

³Dow International Dental College of Dow University of Health sciences

*Corresponding Author: Aditi Jain, Department of Conservative Dentistry and Endodontics, India.

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Marijuana mostly known as Cannabis is a psychoactive drug which is most commonly used illicit drug worldwide. Derived from cannabis plant it is mostly used for Medicinal or Recreational purposes. Marijuana, currently classified as Schedule -1 drug, meaning the drug has not much therapeutic benefits but has a high potential for abuse includes some 483 known compounds in the cannabis plant of which Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is the main psychoactive part. Phytocannabinoids are released when the plant is heated along with 9-delta-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD).

Apparently, medical cannabis or marijuana may refer to the use of cannabinoids to treat certain diseases or improve certain symptoms. As a number of studies and researches are still on progress to prove the same. So far, therapeutic effects of cannabis are limited to reduce chronic pain, nausea and vomiting due to chemotherapy.

Mostly used by smoking, vaporising, with food or as an extract, when consumed cannabis produces psychoactive and physiological effects and it immediately causes euphoria and brings in general alteration of conscious perception. Increased doses causes altered body image, auditory or visual illusions. Ataxia may be due to selective impairment of polysynaptic reflexes and pseudo hallucinations. Also, there may be an episode of acute psychosis.

Cannabis or Marijuana is consumed widely in many different ways - Smoking - it involves burning and inhaling the vaporized cannabinoids as smoke from small pipes or paper wrapped joints.

Vaporizer - in which any form of cannabis is heated to 165°-190° C, that causes the active ingredients to evaporate into vapor making it easy to inhale.

- Tea - but it contains relatively small concentration of THC.
- Edibles - where in cannabis is mostly added to the variety of foods.
- Capsules - containing the cannabis oil.

Despite of all the studies and researches, why people use marijuana is still a debate. Certain studies have shown, that marijuana is mostly used for its potent chemical (THC) which centres and focus on such areas of the brain that are linked to sensory receptions, time perceptions, coordination and concentration, movements, pleasure and memory. It allows the cells of body to release dopamine that causes euphoria. People smoke marijuana to be relieved from anger, pain, fear, anxiety and stress.

Oral effects of cannabis

The data regarding marijuana use and oral health is quiet limited. But some retrospective data sets have shown some serious impacts on Oral Health.

Use of rigorous cannabis may lead to, as follows

Marijuana smoking has been found to be associated with poor quality of oral health. It leads to chronic dryness in mouth (Xerostomia-dry mouth) that further increases the rate of tooth and gum diseases. Regular cannabis users also known to have significantly higher number of caries than non - users.

There's increase in the risk of oral infections i.e Candidiasis known as Thrust / Yeast. The immunosuppressive effects of cannabis is likely to contribute to a higher prevalence of Oral Candidiasis. A hypothesis confines that hydrocarbons present in cannabis provides an energy source for Candida Albicans, which results increased presence and density of colonies.

With due time there can be an increased risk of developing Oral Cancer due to the high temperature of marijuana smoke which is linked to changes in oral tissues.

There has been a number of studies that suggest a direct relationship between cannabis use and periodontal disease. Some recent studies have tested the relationship of periodontitis and frequent cannabis use. Significantly, there were higher rates of

periodontitis among the frequent users of cannabis with higher numbers of sites and with high pocket depths and attachment loss.

Also, Leukoedema, is seen to be one of the most common among cannabis users, but it is still unclear whether associated irritants or cannabis itself is the cause.

Gingival enlargement, Erythroplakia, and Chronic Inflammation of the oral mucosa with hyperkeratosis and Leukoplakia (known as Cannabis Stomatitis) which may develop into malignant neoplasias are found to be associated with smoking marijuana.

Increased risks of head and neck cancers may be prevalent due to synergistic effect between tobacco and cannabis smoke, but other studies have found no association between marijuana use itself and cancers. Currently, the evidence associating marijuana smoking with cancer is minimal.

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