

Parkinson's disease (PD) is a progressive neurological disorder that primarily affects the control of body movement, but there are also many other symptoms that accompany PD. It results from damage to the nerve cells that produce dopamine, a chemical that is vital for the smooth control of muscles and movement. Common symptoms include tremor, slowness of movement, stiff muscles, unsteady walk and balance and coordination problems with increasing symptoms as the disease progresses.

Current treatments

There is no cure for Parkinson's Disease. Treatment is to relieve symptoms and is based on individual circumstances but can include medication, surgery (such as deep brain stimulation) and lifestyle changes and exercise. Also, physical, occupational and speech therapies can help with walking and balance problems, eating and swallowing challenges and speech problems.

Parkinson's Disease and Medical Cannabis

Although many cannabis products and formulations are available, there is a lack of controlled clinical studies addressing medical cannabis (MC) effectiveness on PD symptoms. It's also unclear which PD symptoms would be best treated with MC, and whether certain cannabis formulations are more effective.

Cannabinoids might lessen some parkinsonian symptoms and possibly even have a neuro-protective effect. A recent survey found that people with PD reported cannabis to be effective at reducing symptom severity. In combination with currently used medications for PD, cannabinoids might represent a new approach to the treatment of PD, making it more effective.

Some studies have reported therapeutic effects in non-motor symptoms such as psychosis, rapid eye movement sleep behaviour disorder, daily activities, and stigma. However, these were small, short studies and larger controlled studies are needed to try to replicate these results and to assess the long-term safety of MC in combination with other PD medications, MC is a well-tolerated option to improve both motor (movement) and non-motor symptoms and may be helpful in relieving some unwanted side effects of medications for PD such as nausea or insomnia.

Future randomised placebo-controlled trials are necessary to verify efficiency, side effects, dosage information, and long-term effects of MC on PD.

Support Organisation

Parkinsons Australia <https://www.parkinsons.org.au/>

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Abstracts

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