CBD Effective in Treating Heroin Addiction, New Study Finds

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A new study found that Cannabidiol, also known as CBD, can help treat opioid addiction. CBD is the non-psychoactive ingredient in hemp and marijuana. Given to patients with heroin addiction, CBD reduced their cravings and also their levels of anxiety.

Yasmin Hurd, the lead researcher on the study and director of the Addiction Institute of Mount Sinai, said that the main factor that drives drug use is the intense craving. If medications can dampen that craving, the patient is more likely to shrug it off and reduce their chance of overdose or relapse.

Buprenorphine and methadone are currently the only medications available for opioid addiction, and they function in a similar way?by reducing opioid cravings. However, they are still not widely used despite their effectiveness.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, only one-third of US patients with opioid dependence in private treatment centers actually receive these kinds of medications. According to the 2016 surgeon general?s report on addiction, only 1 in 5 people who required treatment for opioid use disorder was receiving

any sort of therapy.

Public health experts say there are obstacles to getting the conventional medications widely distributed, even if they are already approved by the US Food and Drug Administration. This is because buprenorphine and methadone are still opioids. This means that the medications are still highly regulated.

On top of this, Hurd said it is really burdensome to receive these treatments because they can require frequent visits with practitioners. She said it is necessary to develop new medications, especially now that there is an opioid epidemic killing thousands of Americans each year.

This new study involving CBD could open up more opportunities for addicted individuals to receive the treatment they need. Published in the American Journal of Psychiatry, the study looked at 42 adults who had a recent history of heroin use and were not taking methadone or buprenorphine.

The participants were recruited from social services groups, halfway houses and treatment centers. The participants had used heroin for an average of 13 years. Most of them had gone less than a month without using heroin. Throughout the entire trial period, the participants had to abstain from any heroin use.

The participants were divided into three groups. One group was given 800 milligrams of CBD, another 400 milligrams of CBD, and another was given a placebo. All the participants were dosed once daily for three consecutive days and followed over the next two weeks.

During those two weeks, over the course of several sessions, participants were asked to rate their craving for heroin and their levels of anxiety after being shown images or videos of nature, drug use, and heroin-related paraphernalia.

A week after the last administration of CBD, those who had been given CBD had a two- to three-fold reduction in cravings relative to the placebo group. Hurd said the difference between the two CBD groups was insignificant.

The research team also measured heart rate and cortisol, also known as the stress hormone. Hurd and her colleagues found that the levels in those who received CBD were significantly lower than those who did not receive the drug.

The researchers used Epidiolex as their source of CBD. Epidiolex is the first FDA-approved cannabis-based medication. Click the link to see Palo Alto's top rehab placement programs.

Hurd says it is important to conduct a long term study, following subjects for up to six months. She said there

are still a lot of questions to answer in the next study, including the best dose, and how many times it needed to be administered.

?This is an extremely significant paper. We need to utilize every possible treatment in helping people with chronic pain to find other ways to manage their symptoms and in people with opiate addiction to find relief,? said Dr. Julie Holland, a psychiatrist in New York and former assistant professor of psychiatry at the New York University School of Medicine. ?CBD not only manages the anxiety and cue/craving cycle, but it also diminishes the original pain and inflammation that leads to opiate use in the first place.?

Hurd is optimistic about the study?s implications. ?It's not addictive. No one is diverting it. It doesn't get you high, but it can reduce craving and anxiety.?

If someone in the family is struggling with opioid or alcohol addiction, it is important to seek help. A combination of medical detox and behavioral therapy can go a long way in the fight against drug abuse. But because every individual is affected by addiction differently, a comprehensive program tailored to their specific needs is necessary. Look for a nearby addiction treatment facility today and find out how drug treatment programs work.

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