

Federal Study Finds Cannabis Beneficial for PTSD Treatment

Results of a study released in march revealed improvements among PTSD patients receiving cannabis doses with higher levels of THC

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For veterans diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and looking for alternative ways to treat it, the first FDA-regulated study on the benefits of smoked cannabis yielded favorable results this year.

In a placebo-controlled, double-blind study published on March 17 in PLOS ONE, the peer-reviewed journal specified levels of improvement among participants using smoked cannabis blends with a 9 percent THC concentration.

The Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS), a San Jose, Calif.-based, nonprofit founded in 1986 to raise awareness and understanding of psychedelic substances, conducted the study. In it, the research showed improvements in samples containing 11 percent CBD, as well as mixed samples containing 8 percent of both THC and CBD.

“This study served as the first randomized placebo-controlled trial comparing the therapeutic potential of varying ratios of THC and CBD for treating symptoms of PTS,” said Dr. Marcel O. Bonn-Miller, lead author of the study.

Bonn-Miller added that the next step of the study involves conducting larger, randomized placebo-controlled trials.

“It would help determine the minimally-effective doses of THC needed to safely treat individuals suffering from PTSD,” Bonn-Miller said. “It will also mitigate risks of cannabis dependence in this vulnerable population.”

The results published on March 17 extend from a separate, 150-person study conducted in

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In that study, MAPS compared participants diagnosed with PTSD who used prescribed cannabis with other PTSD sufferers who do not use cannabis to treat symptoms.

Over the course of a year, the study found that cannabis users reported a greater decrease in the severity of their PTSD symptoms. They also were more than 2.5 times as likely to no longer meet the diagnostic criteria for PTSD as those who did not use cannabis.

The 2020 study, unlike its most recent version published on March 17, had not implemented the added use of placebo control.

“One of the biggest takeaways from this study is that veterans with PTSD can use cannabis at self-managed doses, at least in the short term, and not experience a plethora of side effects or a worsening of symptoms,” said Mallory Loflin, a co-author of the paper and volunteer assistant professor of psychiatry at the UC San Diego School of Medicine.

The main component of cannabis is THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol), an intoxicating and psychoactive ingredient that produces the euphoric “high” effect.

Unlike CBD, one of the non-intoxicating cannabinoids in the cannabis plant, the use of THC has not been as widely adopted in the U.S. for medical, therapeutic and recreational uses.

As of May 18, cannabis has been legalized for widespread medical use in 36 states and four U.S. territories, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Cannabis also has been legalized for both medical and recreational use in 16 states, Washington D.C., and two U.S. territories.

Cannabis is still prohibited for prescription use by the Department of Defense and VA. Meanwhile, the VA estimates that 11 to 20 percent of recent veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and as many as one-third of all veterans, suffer from PTSD.

As approved and amended at its 118th National Convention in 2017, the VFW continues to stand and support federally funded research of medicinal cannabis for veterans being treated by the VA for service-related chronic pain.

This article is featured in the September 2021 issue of [VFW magazine](#), and was written by [Ismael Rodriguez Jr.](#), senior writer for the VFW magazine.