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Role of cannabinoids for reluctant epilepsy

Hoori Shahwar
Saudi Arabia

Statement of the Problem: Epilepsy is a neurological health disorder characterized by seizures due to the break in the electrical activities in the brain. Globally, 65 million people are estimated to suffer from epilepsy at any given time while one out of every three person with epilepsy cannot attain full control of epileptic seizures with medications. Even with medications, CNS related side effects are common to affect the quality of life and hence, alternative treatments are being increasingly sought for. Recent improvements in cannabis based interventions for treatment or seizure control for epileptic patients have significantly gained attention with reports of significant improvements especially among children.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: For identifying and establishing the role and effectiveness of cannabinoids in reluctant epilepsy, systematic review method was adopted for this research. Online databases were searched for existing research literature assuming relevant inclusion and exclusion criteria. Studies that adopted intervention based on placebo controlled trials of epileptic patients were selected for review while those with patients above the age of 70 years were discarded. The search was conducted in the online databases of PUBMED, CINAHL, The Cochrane Epilepsy Group Specialized Register and the Cochrane Central register of Controlled Trials. Data was qualitatively analyzed through descriptive content analysis.

Findings: The findings of the systematic review provided conclusive evidence of the efficacy of the cannabinoids in seizure control. Systematic review also established that CBD was found to be superior compared to placebo trials in effectively reducing the frequency of seizures in patients with reluctant epilepsy. The effects were significantly prominent for patients with Dravet Syndrome and Lennox Gastaut Syndrome.

Conclusion & Significance: Although the systematic review provided evidence of the efficacy of cannabinoids in treatment of reluctant epilepsy, data regarding the studies performed on human subjects remain few in number. Furthermore, safety information regarding the usage is also unreliable in nature.

drhoori@gmail.com