Talking With and Listening to Your Patients About Marijuana: What Every Psychiatrist Should Know

Commented [p1]: Title includes an attention-grabbing keyword to tie the course to a current hot topic.

Objectives

Review limitations on current scientific knowledge of marijuana

Review history of marijuana in medicine

Review biochemistry of exogenous and endogenous cannabinoids and their unique biological actions, receptors, approved cannabinoid preparations, metabolism, and routes of administration

Review clinical research data on the effects of marijuana upon psychiatric and non-psychiatric conditions and upon behaviors such as violence and its potential hazards

Discuss how to address providers' legal/ethical/documentation and history-taking issues and patients' questions, concerns, and educational needs regarding marijuana use

Abstract

Marijuana, according to NIDA, is "the most commonly used illicit substance." However, according to state, not federal, laws, medical marijuana is legal in 28 states and D.C. Eight states have also legalized the recreational use of marijuana. As the legalization of marijuana grows, patients are turning to us, their doctors, for advice and information regarding medical marijuana's risks and benefits. As well, many patients with medical/psychiatric illness use marijuana recreationally, with little knowledge of its effects. Both groups deserve education from us based on scientifically derived data. However, despite research to the contrary, the U.S. government still considers marijuana a Schedule I substance "with no currently accepted medical use and a high potential for abuse." The federal stance inhibits research on the science of marijuana and has promoted attitudes toward marijuana's risks and benefits that are not objective or scientifically based. We need to be able to counsel and educate our patients based on objective, scientific data. Too much is said with authority about medical aspects of marijuana—pro and con—that is misleading and deceptive. This course will teach the practitioner to understand the risks and benefits, restrictions, and seductions their patients face in considering cannabis use. The faculty will review the 4,750-year-long history of cannabis as medicine and the recent history of restrictions on research and use of cannabis in the U.S. We will discuss the cannabinoid system, CB1 and CB2 receptors, their distribution and function, as well as the endogenous cannabinoids. We will cover cannabis' routes of administration, bioavailability, distribution and elimination, and the unique actions of various cannabinoids. We will then present clinical research and its limitations on the effects of cannabis in psychiatric conditions, including anxiety, depression, psychosis, PTSD and sleep, and its role in violence. We will also review clinical research on its effects in non-psychiatric medicine, including its actions in inflammation, pain, spastic diseases, appetite loss, nausea, epilepsy and HIV. We will present data on FDA-approved cannabinoids. The faculty will detail hazards of cannabis use, including use in pregnancy, addiction, accidents, psychosis, cognitive deficits, withdrawal, heart and lung illnesses, reproductive effects, and other symptoms. We will discuss synthetic cannabinoids. We will describe the malpractice risks, legal restrictions, and limitations on medical practitioners who may be asked by their patients to issue a 'cannabis card.' We will teach the practitioner to take a history relevant to the use of medical cannabis. We will discuss ways to listen to and talk with patients who consider using or are actively using

Commented [p2]: Abstract notes the primary focus of the course and specifies what attendees will learn.

cannabis for medical reasons, or who are using cannabis recreationally while in treatment for a psychiatric or other medical disorder. We will not address screening for or treatment of addiction.

Agenda

0:00 Introduction
0:15 History of cannabis in medicine, and the history of legal restrictions on its popular usage and in medical research
0:40 The endocannabinoid system, CB1 & CB2 receptors, endogenous cannabinoids, & distribution
1:10 Routes of administration, bioavailability, distribution & elimination, and actions of the various cannabinoids; FDA approved cannabinoids
1:30 Break
2:05 Clinical research on usefulness in psychiatry: anxiety, depression, psychosis, PTSD, sleep, violence
2:25 Clinical research on usefulness in non-psychiatric medicine: inflammation, pain, spasm, appetite, nausea, HIV, epilepsy, and other conditions
2:55 Hazards in cannabis use: addiction, accidents, psychosis, cognitive and motor deficits, withdrawal, cardio-respiratory, other psychiatric symptoms
3:20 Synthetic cannabinoids
3:30 Current legal restrictions and limitations on cannabis "recommendation" by psychiatric practitioners
3:45 Cumulative Q & A

Commented [p3]: Always end the session with a minimum 15 minutes of audience Q&A