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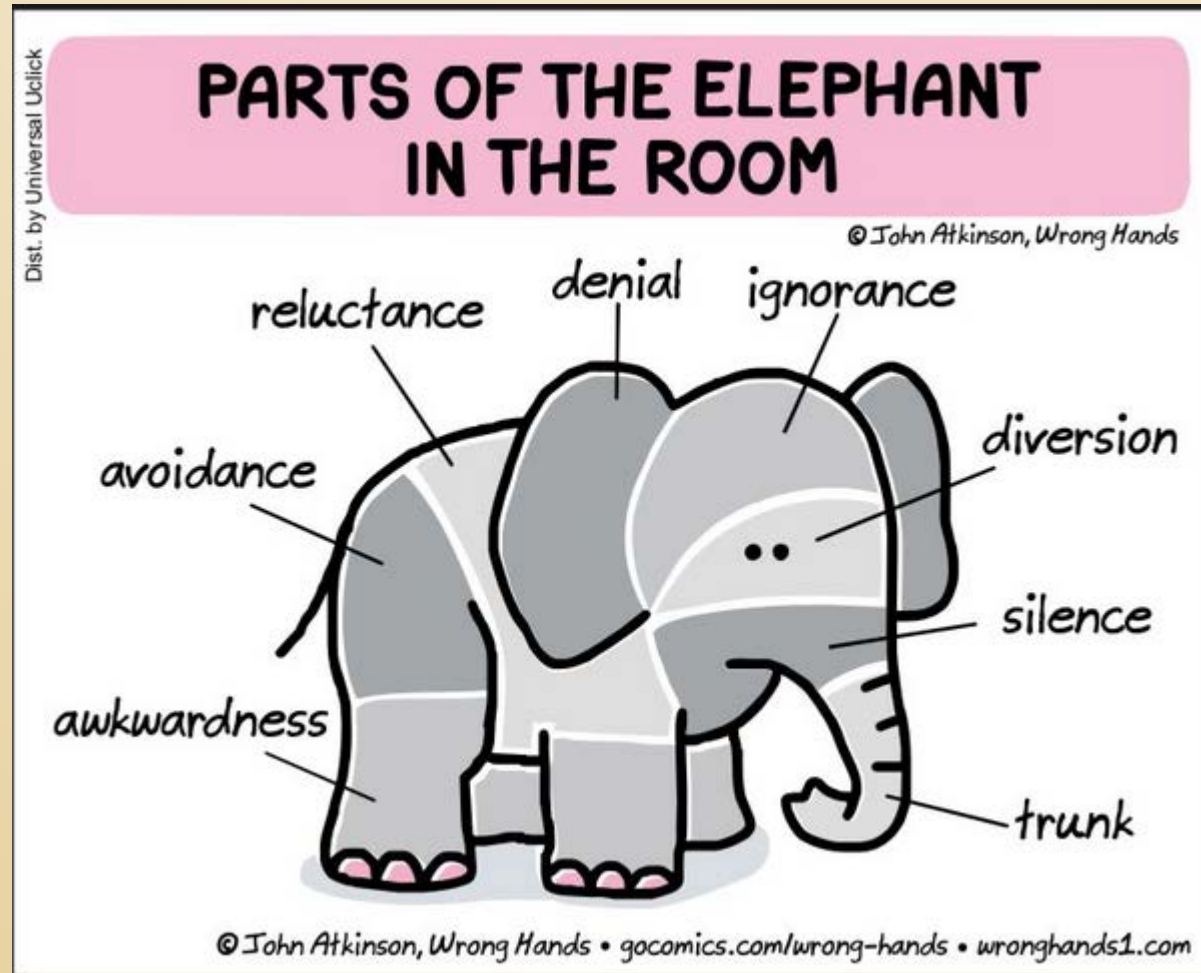


Cannabis, Opioids and Pain: the elephant in the room

Beatriz H. Carlini, PhD, MPH
Symposium on Marijuana Research in WA
May 2018

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“Cannabis may have a role in curbing the opioid epidemic”



Marijuana use and Public Health: risk centered messages

- Prevention, public health communication and research workforce:
 - Alcohol and tobacco
 - Health risk behaviors
- Historically funding has been skewed towards risks
- Concern with youth and most vulnerable
- Historical mistrust of legalization



Can Marijuana Help Addicts Kick Opioids?

Research shows this once maligned 'gateway' drug could be an off-ramp.

By JEFFREY A. SINGER • November 14, 2017

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Military veterans defy Jeff Sessions, fight for medical marijuana to kick opioid addiction

Army veteran CW4 Perry Parks reaches to lift a symbolic pill bottle that was placed in front of the White House by a group of medical marijuana supporters to raise awareness of opioid addiction.

Rick Morgan | @RickAnselMorgan

Published 9:59 AM ET Wed, 7 Feb 2018

CNBC.com



The Washington Post

Home » News

Can Cannabis Wean Addicts Off Heroin and Other Opiates?

When it comes to the opioid crisis, we need to utilize every available tool. Can cannabis wean addicts off heroin and other opiates?



Published February 6, 2018 1:46 pm
February 6, 2018 1:46 pm
By Mike Adams



How Medical Marijuana Could Help End the Opioid Epidemic

A bill in New Mexico could make medical marijuana available for... but with the science will it become a

Presented by
New Belgium Brewing



PUBLIC HEALTH

High Hopes Ride on Marijuana Amid Opioid Crisis

Medical weed is a popular way to manage chronic pain



A worker trims cannabis at the growing facility of the Tikun Olam company near the northern city of Safed, Israel. Credit: Uriel Sinai Getty Images

This presentation – research evidence

- Are cannabinoids effective for chronic pain?
- Can cannabis be used as a substitute for opioid-based medications?
 - Quit, prevent or reverse dose escalation

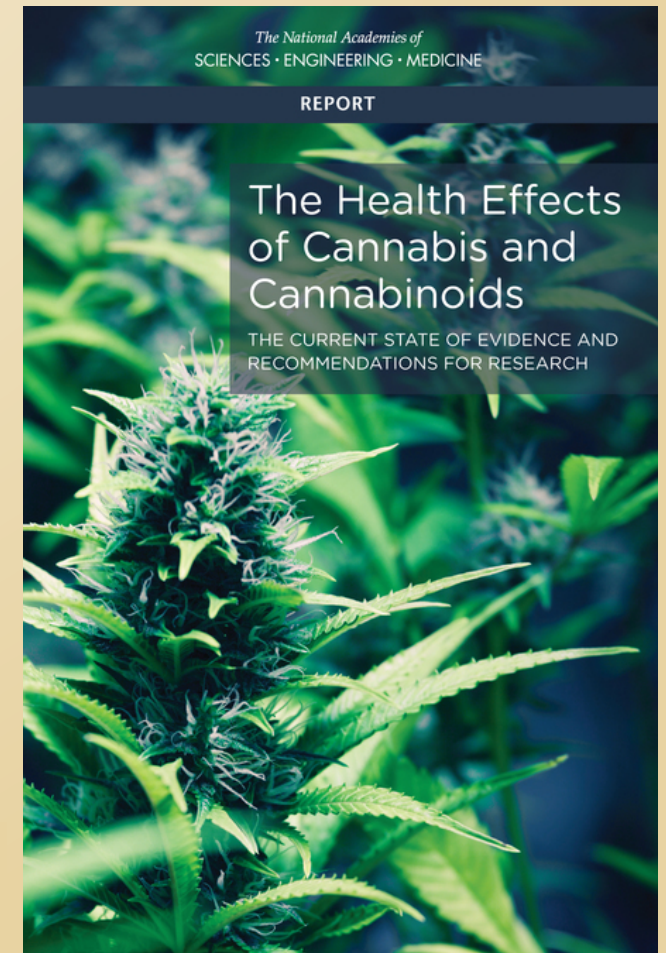


Cannabinoids:
Natural and unique components found within the cannabis plant.

Are cannabinoids effective for chronic pain?

“There is strong/conclusive evidence that cannabis is an effective treatment for chronic pain in adults”

- 28 randomized control trials
- Effects are modest
- Most studies - Nabiximols



Strong evidence of a moderate effect is way better than the evidence for opioids!

Clinical Review & Education

Special Communication

CDC Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain— United States, 2016

- Observational studies or randomized clinical trials with notable limitations
- No trials of opioid vs an acceptable control condition (placebo or nonopioid therapy)
- No studies with a follow up of at least 1 year,
- No studies with outcomes related to pain, function, or quality of life.

Dowell D, Haegerich TM, Chou R. CDC Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain—United States, 2016. *JAMA*. 2016;315(15):1624-1645.

What about Nabiximols?

“Cannabis in the other side of the pond”

- Produced in Europe, as an herbal preparation
- Standardized extract of THC and CBD plus other minor cannabinoids, flavonoids, and terpenes from two cannabis plant varieties⁽¹⁾
- Spray - 1:1 ratio THC/CBD ⁽²⁾
- Commercially available: Austria, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Lichtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom⁽²⁾

(1) NCI Drug Dictionary - <https://www.cancer.gov/publications/dictionaries/cancer-drug/def/nabiximol>

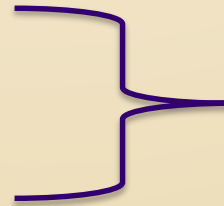
(2) <https://www.gwpharm.com/products-pipeline/sativex-delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol-and-cannabidiol>



Can cannabis be used as a substitute for opioid-based medications?

Yes: Preliminary research

- Patients narratives
- One longitudinal study(*)



- Among people willing to utilize cannabis
- Self Report
- Observational

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- (*) Vigil JM et al. Associations between medical cannabis and prescription opioid use in chronic pain patients: A preliminary cohort study. PLoS One. 2017;12(11):e0187795.

Cannabis Versus Oxycodone for Pain Relief

ClinicalTrials.gov Identifier: NCT02892591

A Double-Blind, Placebo-Controlled Crossover Study Comparing the Analgesic Efficacy of Cannabis Versus Oxycodone

Ability of cannabis to reduce chronic back and neck pain;

Cannabis will be compared to both oxycodone and a placebo.

Recruiting – 100 participants

Funded by the University of Colorado

PI: Emily Lindley, PhD, University of Colorado, Denver.

Great
News!!!

Public Health Summary:

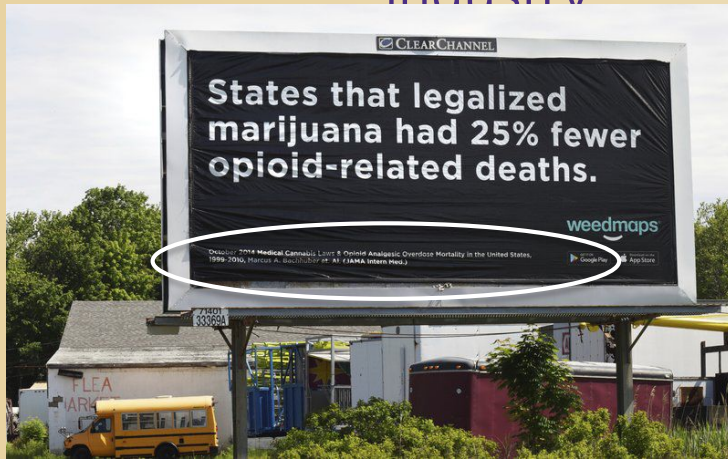
Science-based and politically informed

- Cannabis/cannabinoids are effective for chronic pain
 - Moderate effect for chronic pain is a great thing!
 - Caveat:
 - Most research was conducted with extract not available in the US
 - The cannabis-based products available in the US cannot be legally tested in randomized trials.
- Cannabis may help to reduce or quit Opiates taken to control pain
 - Consult a health care provider



Why this matter? Public Health implications

- **One-sided message:** Jeopardize credibility of risk oriented messages
- **Skepticism:** Invalidate experience of those suffering from chronic pain
- **Silence:**
 - Miss the opportunity to give a balanced message
 - The only voice: non-medical and market-driven marijuana industry



Moving Forward

- Acknowledge the complexity of the topic
- Qualify the statement “there is not research enough”
- Recognize possible benefits of cannabis to manage pain and other medical conditions
- Distinguish public health voice from marijuana industry





Thanks!

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Support from:
Marijuana Dedicated Funds to ADAI/UW and
WA DSHS Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR)