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CANNABINOID EXTRACT FOR TREATMENT OF CHEMOTHERAPY-INDUCED

1. J Pain Symptom Manage. 2014 Jan;47(1):166-73. doi: 10.1016/j.jpainsymman.2013.02.018. Epub 2013 Jun 4.

A double-blind, placebo-controlled, crossover pilot trial with extension using an oral mucosal cannabinoid extract for treatment of chemotherapy-induced neuropathic pain.

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CONTEXT: Neuropathic pain caused by chemotherapy limits dosing and duration of potentially life-saving anti-cancer treatment and impairs quality of life. Chemotherapeutic neuropathy responds poorly to conventional treatments, and there is an urgent medical need for new treatments. Recent preclinical studies demonstrate that cannabinoid agonists suppress established chemotherapy-evoked neuropathy.

OBJECTIVES: This was a pilot trial to begin to investigate a currently available cannabinoid agent, nabiximols (oral mucosal spray containing cannabinoids), in the treatment of chemotherapy-induced neuropathic pain.

METHODS: A randomized, placebo-controlled crossover pilot study was done in 16 patients with established chemotherapy-induced neuropathic pain. A 0-10 point numeric rating scale for pain intensity (NRS-PI) was used as the primary outcome measure.

RESULTS: When examining the whole group, there was no statistically significant difference between the treatment and the placebo groups on the NRS-PI. A responder analysis demonstrated that there were five participants who reported a two-point or greater reduction in pain that trended toward statistical significance and the number needed to treat was five.

CONCLUSION: Chemotherapy-induced neuropathic pain is particularly resistant to currently available treatments. This pilot trial found a number needed to treat of five and an average decrease of 2.6 on an 11-point NRS-PI in five “responders” (as compared with a decrease of 0.6 with placebo) and supports that it is worthwhile to study nabiximols in a full randomized, placebo-controlled trial of chemotherapy-induced neuropathic pain.

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