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Cannabidiol: a promising drug for neurodegenerative disorders?

Iuvone T¹, Esposito G, De Filippis D, Scuderi C, Steardo L.

Author information

Abstract

Neurodegenerative diseases represent, nowadays, one of the main causes of death in the industrialized country. They are characterized by a loss of neurons in particular regions of the nervous system. It is believed that this nerve cell loss underlies the subsequent decline in cognitive and motor function that patients experience in these diseases. A range of mutant genes and environmental toxins have been implicated in the cause of neurodegenerative disorders but the mechanism remains largely unknown. At present, inflammation, a common denominator among the diverse list of neurodegenerative diseases, has been implicated as a critical mechanism that is responsible for the progressive nature of neurodegeneration. Since, at present, there are few therapies for the wide range of neurodegenerative diseases, scientists are still in search of new therapeutic approaches to the problem. An early contribution of neuroprotective and antiinflammatory strategies for these disorders seems particularly desirable because isolated treatments cannot be effective. In this contest, marijuana derivatives have attracted special interest, although these compounds have always raised several practical and ethical problems for their potential abuse. Nevertheless, among Cannabis compounds, cannabidiol (CBD), which lacks any unwanted psychotropic effect, may represent a very promising agent with the highest prospect for therapeutic use.

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