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Palmitoylethanolamide: from endogenous cannabimimetic substance to innovative medicine for the treatment of cannabis dependence.

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Abstract

Palmitoylethanolamide (PEA) is a fatty acid amide showing some pharmacodynamic similarities with Δ 9-tetrahydrocannabinol, the principal psychoactive compound present in the cannabis plant. Like Δ 9-tetrahydrocannabinol, PEA can produce a direct or indirect activation of cannabinoid receptors. Furthermore, it acts as an agonist at TRPV1 receptor. The hypothesis is that PEA has anti-craving effects in cannabis dependent patients, is efficacious in the treatment of withdrawal symptoms, produces a reduction of cannabis consumption and is effective in the prevention of cannabis induced neurotoxicity and neuro-psychiatric disorders.

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