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Nabilone for the treatment of pain in fibromyalgia.

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Abstract

A randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial was conducted to determine the benefit of nabilone in pain management and quality of life improvement in 40 patients with fibromyalgia. After a baseline assessment, subjects were titrated up on nabilone, from 0.5 mg PO at bedtime to 1 mg BID over 4 weeks or received a corresponding placebo. At the 2- and 4-week visits, the primary outcome measure, visual analog scale (VAS) for pain, and the secondary outcome measures, number of tender points, the average tender point pain threshold, and the Fibromyalgia Impact Questionnaire (FIQ), were evaluated. After a 4-week washout period, subjects returned for reassessment of the outcome measures. There were no significant differences in population demographics between groups at baseline. There were significant decreases in the VAS (-2.04, $P < .02$), FIQ (-12.07, $P < .02$), and anxiety (-1.67, $P < .02$) in the nabilone treated group at 4 weeks. There were no significant improvements in the placebo group. The treatment group experienced more side effects per person at 2 and 4 weeks (1.58, $P < .02$ and 1.54, $P < .05$), respectively. Nabilone appears to be a beneficial, well-tolerated treatment option for fibromyalgia patients, with significant benefits in pain relief and functional improvement.

PERSPECTIVE: To our knowledge, this is the first randomized, controlled trial to assess the benefit of nabilone, a synthetic cannabinoid, on pain reduction and quality of life improvement in patients with fibromyalgia. As nabilone improved symptoms and was well-tolerated, it may be a useful adjunct for pain management in fibromyalgia.

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