

**Comparing the Effectiveness of Cannabis Use and Opioid Use in Palliative Care Patients**

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### **Abstract**

This project aims to study the efficacy of the use of marijuana versus opioids for pain management in patients over 65 years old on palliative care. Palliative care is defined as an approach that focuses on improving the quality of care of seriously ill people and their families (Wallerstedt et. al., 2019). Opioids have been a reliable form of chronic pain relief in the past, but since the legalization of marijuana in some states, it has been presented as an alternative. A search was conducted using key words including “marijuana”, “opioids”, “palliative care”, and “pain management”. Exclusion criteria included articles published prior to 2017 as well as articles written about pain management methods other than opioids and marijuana. The literature indicated that while opioids are a reliable source of pain relief in this population, there are several adverse effects associated with their use including an increased fall risk, increased mental fatigue or delirium, and respiratory depression. An alternative form of pain relief is marijuana, which does not share many of the adverse effects associated with opioids. However, there are barriers to marijuana use in a palliative care setting, including legality of marijuana in certain states, and the related barriers to educating providers about the use of the drug. The alternative of using marijuana for pain relief, indicates a decrease in side effects seen in opioids and adequate pain relief seen in palliative care patients.

*Keywords:* marijuana, opioids, palliative care, older adults, pain, pain management

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