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Contact:

The North American Menopause Society
Eileen Petridis (epetridis@fallsandco.com)
Phone: (216) 696-0229



More Women Turning to Medical Cannabis for Relief of Menopause Symptoms

New study finds that a growing number of primarily perimenopausal women are using medical cannabis to treat menopause symptoms such as sleep disturbance and mood/anxiety

CLEVELAND, Ohio (August 3, 2022)—The legalization of medical cannabis has led to its use in treating a growing number of health problems. A new study suggests that it is becoming more common for women to use medical cannabis for menopause-related symptoms. Perimenopausal women, who report significantly worse menopause symptoms (particularly depression), represent the greatest percentage of users. Study results are published online today in *Menopause*, the journal of The North American Menopause Society (NAMS).

Hormone changes associated with menopause are responsible for causing a wide array of bothersome symptoms, including hot flashes, sleep disturbance, depressed mood, and anxiety. Although several treatment options, particularly hormone therapy, have proven effective in managing these symptoms, not all women are able or willing to use these options. This has led to the ongoing search for more nonhormone treatment options.

Several observational studies previously demonstrated that medical cannabis use is associated with various clinical benefits, including improvements on measures of anxiety, mood, sleep, and pain, as well as cognitive improvement after treatment. But no studies to date have examined the safety and efficacy of medical cannabis to alleviate menopause-related symptoms.

In this new study involving more than 250 perimenopausal and postmenopausal women who were recruited through advertising targeted to women interested in women's health and cannabis or cannabinoids, researchers sought to assess cannabis use, including modes of use, and to compare usage patterns between perimenopausal and postmenopausal women. Results suggested that many women (86%) currently use cannabis as an adjunct treatment for menopause-related symptoms via a variety of different modes of use, with the most common being smoking (84.3%) and edibles (78.3%). The most frequently reported indications for medical cannabis use were menopause-related disturbances of sleep and mood/anxiety.

Compared with postmenopausal participants, perimenopausal participants reported significantly worse menopause-related symptomatology, including more anxiety and hot flashes. Perimenopausal women were also more likely to report a higher incidence of depression and anxiety, as well as increased use of medical cannabis to treat these symptoms. Additional research is necessary to confirm the effectiveness of cannabis for the treatment of various menopause symptoms.

Study results are published in the article “A survey of medical cannabis use during perimenopause and postmenopause.”

“This study suggests that medical cannabis use may be common in midlife women experiencing menopause-related symptoms. Given the lack of clinical trial data on the efficacy and safety of medical cannabis for management of menopause symptoms, more research is needed before this treatment can be recommended in clinical practice. Healthcare professionals should query their patients about the use of medical cannabis for menopause symptoms and provide evidence-based recommendations for symptom management,” says Dr. Stephanie Faubion, NAMS medical director.

For more information about menopause and healthy aging, visit www.menopause.org.

Founded in 1989, The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) is North America’s leading nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the health and quality of life of all women during midlife and beyond through an understanding of menopause and healthy aging. Its multidisciplinary membership of 2,000 leaders in the field—including clinical and basic science experts from medicine, nursing, sociology, psychology, nutrition, anthropology, epidemiology, pharmacy, and education—makes NAMS uniquely qualified to serve as the definitive resource for health professionals and the public for accurate, unbiased information about menopause and healthy aging. To learn more about NAMS, visit www.menopause.org.