



Dr Anthony
MANDER

ADHD Newsletter 12

Medicinal Cannabis, Driving and Stimulants

Cannabis sativa



female *Cannabis sativa*,
recreational/medicinal marijuana

Scientific classification

Kingdom:	Plantae
Clade:	Tracheophytes
Clade:	Angiosperms
Clade:	Eudicots
Clade:	Rosids
Order:	Rosales
Family:	Cannabaceae
Genus:	<i>Cannabis</i>
Species:	<i>C. sativa</i>

Binomial name

Cannabis sativa
L.

Subspecies

- *C. sativa* subsp. *sativa*
- *C. sativa* subsp. *indica*
- *C. sativa* subsp. *ruderalis*

Cannabis is made from the dried flowering heads and leaves of a plant called *Cannabis sativa*. Cannabis contains a complex mix of approximately 60 unique 'cannabinoids', along with many other chemical compounds. The main active ingredient responsible for the 'high' produced by cannabis is delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). Other related substances in cannabis include cannabidiol (CBD) and cannabinol (CBN), each of which has different pharmacological effects.

Medicinal cannabis is a term that refers to legal, high quality and standardised products prepared under controlled pharmaceutical laboratory conditions from crude or raw cannabis. Crude cannabis is a difficult drug for doctors to prescribe because the dose and potency of the drug in each case is not tested or known. Pharmaceutical preparations of cannabis use modified active components of cannabis in medical formulations, which maximise the therapeutic benefit and minimise side effects.

Nabiximols (Sativex®) is the only cannabis medicine on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods. Sativex® approved product information states that patients taking Sativex® should not drive. This advice is consistent with its registered indication (severe spasticity in patients with multiple sclerosis).

Currently, the scientific basis for using medicinal cannabis is limited. There is some evidence it may be useful in treating: Certain childhood epilepsies: Spasticity and pain in multiple sclerosis: chronic non-cancer pain and in relieving chemotherapy induced nausea and vomiting

There is no evidence of benefit in ADHD

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Tony has over 30 years' experience in psychiatry and specialises in the treatment of adults with AD(H)D using Telepsychiatry

As with many other medicines, medicinal cannabis can cause unwanted side effects. These include nausea and vomiting, changes in appetite, diarrhoea, drowsiness, dizziness, loss of balance, difficulty with concentration and problems with thinking and memory. This can affect a person's fitness to drive and operate machinery. Studies have shown a significant proportion of drivers involved in road crashes test positive for cannabis. In WA, it is an offence to drive with THC present in your system, regardless of whether the THC comes from prescribed legal medicinal cannabis or illicit recreational cannabis (ref 1). Roadside drug testing in Australia tests for THC in saliva. Driving restrictions may not be necessary in some States for those taking compounds that only contain cannabidiol (ref 2)

Drug-drug interactions can cause or worsen impairment. Delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol and cannabidiol can interact with other medications, impairing the metabolism of other drugs or causing cumulative effects such as sedation. Cannabidiol is known to affect the metabolism of certain anti-epileptic drugs by CYP 450 enzymes, elevating plasma levels of some benzodiazepines and certain other drugs.

Whilst legislation restricts the use of prescribed stimulants in those regularly using illicit substances (including THC containing compounds), there are clinical concerns such as the increased risk of cognitive impairment (and its sequelae) and psychosis. For these reasons, I will not prescribe stimulants to any individual where they are using THC containing compounds including medicinal cannabis. Be aware that I automatically get notified by HDWA if permission is granted to any doctor to prescribe these compounds to one of my patients.

References

1. Medicinal Cannabis FAQs. Government of Western Australia: Communications Directorate, Department of Health 2019
2. Prescribed Cannabis Medicines and Fitness to Drive. NSW Government: Ministry of Health 2018

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