

## Endocannabinoid System and Chronic Illness

Greg Abernathy, LMSW  
[GregAbernathyAnandConsulting@gmail.com](mailto:GregAbernathyAnandConsulting@gmail.com)  
 505-675-0692

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### The Endocannabinoid System (ECS):

- Biological regulatory system that regulates every other regulatory system in our bodies.
- Involved in our perception of the world.
- Helps connect us to our internal experiences.
- Associated with how we think and feel about ourselves.
- Is an aspect of our social interactions with people.
- Goal of the endocannabinoid system: Homeostasis—Balance.

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### ECS Function:

- ECS is involved in protection, food behaviors, rest and relaxation, repair of biological systems, sleep, eat, forget & protect, along with being integral in gut-health and the microbiome.
- Regulates pleasure, well-being, cellular homeostasis, pain perception, and immunological function.
- ECS protects against cancer cell proliferation, nerve damage, neurological disorders, and autoimmune disorders.

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### How the ECS Functions:

- The endocannabinoid system interacts via the CB1, CB2 & a variety of TRPV receptors in the body and brain to help regulate receptor functions via chemical messengers—Neurotransmitters.
- CB1 receptors work more with Central Nervous System (CNS) and are abundant in the brain.
- CB2 receptors are more associated with peripheral systems and immune function.
- TRPV1 receptors modulate pain perception.

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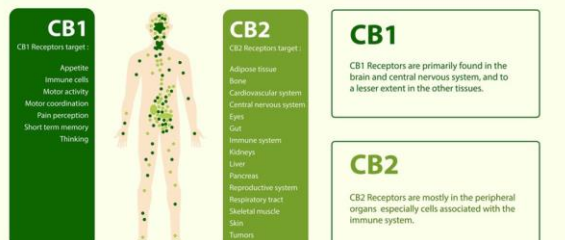
### ECS Function:

- Primary endocannabinoids are anandamide (AEA) and 2-arachydonal glycerol (2-AG).
- AEA works on CB1 primarily and 2-AG works on CB2 primarily and can also be seen in the brain with TBI's.
- Endocannabinoids are produced and broken down on demand & travel in a retrograde fashion to inhibit neurotransmitter release from the post-synaptic neuron to the pre-synaptic neuron.

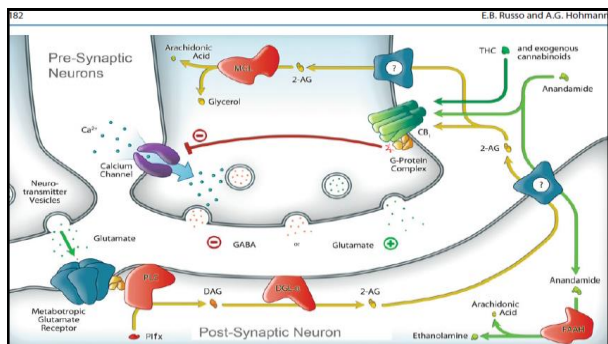
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## HUMAN ENDOCANNABINOID SYSTEM

THE MOST WELL-KNOWN CANNABINOID RECEPTORS, CB1 AND CB2, ARE PROTEINS THAT ARE EMBEDDED IN THE MEMBRANE OF CELLS. THESE SURFACE PROTEINS ARE THEN ATTACHED TO ANOTHER PROTEIN THAT DETERMINES THE SIGNALING DIRECTION, ACTIVATION OR INHIBITION.



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## CB1 Expression in the Brain

- CB1 is highly expressed in nociceptive (pain sensing) areas, cerebellum (coordinated movement, equilibrium, posture, and motor learning), limbic system (reward, memory, emotions), basal ganglia (voluntary movement, procedural learning, eye-movements, cognition, and emotions).
- Though prominent in the substantia nigra (part of midbrain & basal ganglia important for reward and movement high in dopaminergic neurons), and periaqueductal grey matter (critical in autonomic function, motivated behavior, behavioral responses to threats, and primary control center for descending pain); distributed in a limited capacity in the brain stem—and not in medullary respiratory centers; harm reduction compared to opiates.

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## CB1 Receptors:

- CB1 is the most abundant G-protein-coupled receptor in the brain, with a major neuromodulatory function; Role in “relax, eat, sleep, forget and protect.” (Di Marzo, 1998).
- CB1 receptors modulate pain, memory, movement, emotion, appetite, emesis (vomiting), seizure threshold, GI motility/secretion.

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## CB2 Receptors:

- CB2 is a mainly peripheral (body, organs, etc.), immunomodulatory receptor with an important role in pain, inflammation, and physiological defense (Pacher, 2011).
- CB2 agonists are currently being studied for the treatment of hepatic (liver) fibrosis and several other autoimmune disorders.

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## CB1 & CB2 Receptors in Skin:

- Cannabidiol (CBD) works on both CB1 and CB2 receptors which along with their effect on inflammation has anti-bacterial properties and is a TRPV4 agonist which can reduce acne (Olah, 2014).
- Topical THC is good for muscle pain and soreness provided the topical has other ingredients that help it absorb in the skin.
- CBD as a topical works best for conditions like eczema or psoriasis.

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## ECS Stimulation:

- The ECS is active in cardiac and bone physiology.
- Cannabis typically lowers blood pressure and raises heart rate, especially THC.
- Using cannabis in excess increases tachycardia (rapid heart rate), and postural hypotension (blood pressure), (Mittleman et al., 2001).
- CBD has been shown to stimulate bone fracture healing (Kogan et al., 2015).

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**Mechanisms of pain control by Cannabinoids:**  
These effects take place whether they are endogenous or exogenous cannabinoids.

- Serotonergic
- Dopaminergic
- Anti-Inflammatory
- Cannabinoid-Opioid Interactions
- Periaqueductal Gray Matter
- NMDA/Glutamate Receptors
- Substance P (vasodilation & neuromodulator)
- Synergy/Entourage Effect

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**ECS Tone:**


- ECS tone is the baseline production of endocannabinoids and can be influenced by many factors e.g., trauma.
- ECS tone in certain brain regions (PAG) work in the control of pain (Walker, 1999).
- PAG is known as the source of migraines
- Cannabinoids are also located in the thalamus (relay for motor and sensory signals) and when tested in this region, cannabinoids were shown to be 10 times more effective than morphine (Russo, 2008).

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**Cannabis and Muscle Spasticity:**

- Muscle tone is under tonic control of the ECS.
- CB1 agonists reduce spasticity while antagonist exacerbate it (Baker et al., 2000).
- CB1 Receptors are densely represented in cortical and basal ganglia areas (Parkinson's & Multiple Sclerosis), (Glass et al., 1997).
- Endocannabinoid functions are prominent in interneurons of the spinal cord (Farquhar-Smith et al., 2000).
- Cannabis based medications are clinically effective treatments for spasticity in multiple sclerosis (Novotna et al., 2011).

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What's the Point of all this, you bearded Glory?

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That our endocannabinoid system is integral to our physical and mental health, and overall wellbeing!

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**Clinical Endocannabinoid Deficiency:**

- Proposed by neurologist and cannabis researcher, Dr. Ethan Russo, MD., in 2004.
- Hypothesis:** All humans have an underlying "endocannabinoid tone" that is a reflection of levels of AEA & 2-AG, their production, metabolism, and relative abundance and state of cannabinoid receptors.
- Theory:** In certain conditions, whether congenital or acquired, endocannabinoid tone becomes deficient, and productive of pathophysiological—and mental—syndromes.

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## Clinical Endocannabinoid Deficiency (CED) and other conditions:

- Migraine
- Fibromyalgia
- Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)
- Causalgia/allodynia/brachial plexopathy/phantom limb pain
- Infantile colic
- Glaucoma
- Dysmenorrhea (menstrual cramps)
- Hyperemesis Gravidarum (severe nausea and vomiting during pregnancy)
- Post-traumatic stress (PTS)
- Bipolar

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## CED Comorbidity: Migraine, Fibromyalgia, IBS:

All are hyperalgesic states: Pain perception with no apparent cause.

Primary headache in 97% of 201 fibromyalgia patients (Nicolodi, 1996).

35.6% of 101 migraine/coronary heart disease subjects had fibromyalgia (Peres, 2001).

31.6% of IBS patients had fibromyalgia; 32% of fibromyalgia patients had IBS (Sperber, 1999).

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## Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE):

- Developed by the CDC and Kaiser Permanente in 1995 (Felitti et al., 1998).
- 10 question assessment surrounding childhood experiences over 3 domains: Physical Abuse, Physical Neglect, and Environmental factors.
- ACE scores of 3 and higher are shown to have higher incidences of heart disease and autoimmune disorders later in life.

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## ACE and CED and Mental Health:

- It has been shown that those who have developmental trauma and aversive experiences in childhood experience are prone to have higher reported symptoms associated with anxiety, depression, bipolar, BPD, ADHD, substance use, and other mental health concerns.
- Just as with physical conditions, the ECS influences mental health as well.
- The more we can understand the underlying mechanisms of these conditions, and how to appropriately apply medical cannabis for symptom management, helps us guide clients in ways that improve their well-being and quality of life.

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## Cannabis Overview

- It is critical to understand that cannabis is a plant that modulates the ECS, an innate homeostatic regulator of human physiology. CBD is a promising therapeutic ECS modulator.
- The ECS can also be influenced by lifestyle and dietary factors beyond cannabis, such as low-impact aerobic exercise and an anti-inflammatory/antioxidant diet.

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## Cannabis Plant:

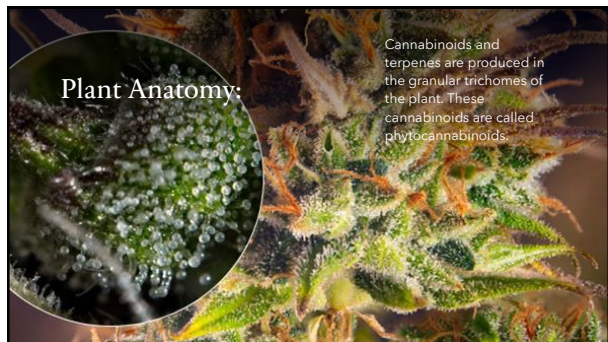
There are three cannabis plant types, depending on who you ask.

Type I: High THC

Type II: Mixed THC/CBD

Type III: CBD Dominant

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**Cannabinoids:**

- THC and CBD are the primary cannabinoids the plant produces.
- There are over 120 different cannabinoids in cannabis and each one has its own specific pharmacology.
- Research is currently being done on the various cannabinoids, and flavonoids, and many other constituents that have promising therapeutic effects.

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**Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC):**

- Isolated in 1964 (Gaoni & Mechoulam, 1964).
- Delta-9 THC is what most people are familiar with.
- THC is produced in high amounts and is selectively bred to produce higher amounts of THC.
- There are several types of THC in the plant: THC-A, THCV, THCP, Delta-8 THC, and others.

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**THC:**

- THC selectively binds to CB1 receptors and binds endogenous cannabinoids AEA and 2-AG (Patcher et al., 2006).
- THC mimics AEA and is responsible for the psychoactive intoxicating side-effect of cannabis.
- THC has many therapeutic benefits.

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**THC Benefits:**

- THC is a muscle relaxant and reduces muscle spasticity of MS.
- Works as an antiemetic—prevents vomiting.
- THC does not inhibit COX-1 or COX-2 (Stott, 2005), like many other pain medications do; which can cause ulcers, heart attacks, and strokes as possible side-effects.
- Can reduce Beta-amyloid production (Eubanks, 2006); which is a component of Alzheimer's disease.

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**THC Benefits:**

- THC is a bronchodilator (Williams, 1976).
- Analgesic and antipruritic (itching), (Neff, 2002).
- Neuroprotective antioxidant & prevents brain damage (Hampson, 1998; Magid et al., 2019).
- THC has 20 times the anti-inflammatory power than Aspirin and 2 times the anti-inflammatory power of hydrocortisone (Evans, 1991).

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## Cannabidiol (CBD):

CBD was positively identified in 1963 by Mechoulam & Shvo.

CBD is psychoactive but not intoxicating (Russo, 2017).




CBD hardly binds to CB1 receptors.

CBD binds to CB2 receptors and mimics 2-AG.

Works as a negative allosteric modulator on CB1, which is why it can counteract the negative intoxicating side-effects of THC (Laprairie, 2015).

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## CBD Benefits:

-  CBD is neuroprotective anti-oxidant, strongly inhibits glutamate excitotoxicity (Hampson et al., 1998).
-  Known as a TRPV1 agonist like AEA and desensitize it (Bisogno et al., 2001).
-  Inhibits uptake of AEA and weakly inhibits the breakdown of AEA.

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## CBD Benefits:

- CBD is an alerting molecule compared to THC (Nicholson, 2004).
- CBD is an anticonvulsant (Cunha, 1980; Jones, 2010).
- Anti-anxiety (Crippa, 2010).
- CBD is cytotoxic in high concentrations for certain types of breast cancer while being preservative to other cells (Ligresti, 2006).

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## CBD Benefits:

- Antagonizes tumor necrosis factor alpha (tnf- $\alpha$ ) in rheumatoid arthritis (Malfait, 2000).
- Agonist for 5-HT<sub>1a</sub> (serotonin) as anti-anxiety (Russo & Parker, 2005).
- Reduces brain damage from stroke and liver damage due to hepatic encephalopathy (Magen, 2010).
- CBD stimulates bone fracture healing (Kogan, 2015).

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## CBD Misconceptions:

- Small amounts are enough: Studies are showing that more CBD is better—especially with schizophrenia.
- CBD is sedative: CBD is an alerting molecule and sedation is typically due to drug-drug interactions or interactions with terpenoids like myrcene (Russo, 2017).
- CBD can turn into THC in the body: Humans don't have the enzymes to make this possible, and it upregulates AEA and ECS (Crippa et al., 2012).

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## Other Cannabinoids in the Plant:

- Cannabichromene (CBC)
- Cannabigerol (CBG)
- Tetrahydrocannabivarin (THCV)
- Cannabidivarin (CBDV)
- Cannabidolic Acid (CBD-A)
- Cannabinol (CBN)

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### Cannabigerol (CBG):

- GABA uptake inhibitor more so than THC & CBD (Banerjee et al., 1975).
- Antidepressant (Musty-Deyo, 2006).
- Lowers blood pressure and interocular pressure.
- Strong antiseptic and antibiotic properties and is powerful against MRSA (Appendino, 2008).
- Stimulates several TRP channels (de Petrocellis, 2010; 2011).

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### Cannabichromene (CBC):

- Anti-inflammatory (Wirth et al., 1980).
- Pain relief, although less potent than THC (Davis & Hatoum, 1983).
- Antibiotic & Antifungal (EISOhly, 1982; McPartland & Russo, 2001).
- Destroys cancer cells (Ligresti et al., 2006).
- Demonstrates FAAH-inhibition (fatty acid amide hydrolase) that breaks down endocannabinoids and boosts AEA levels (Bisogno, 2001).

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### Tetrahydrocannabivarin (THCV):

- CB1 antagonist at low concentrations (Thomas et al., 2005), but becomes an agonist at higher doses (Pertwee, 2007).
- Helps with weight loss and blood sugar control for type II diabetics (Cawthorne, 2007; Riedel, 2009).
- Anticonvulsant (Hill et al., 2010).
- Decreases edema (fluid retention) and hyperalgesia (increased sensitivity to pain), (Bolognini, 2010).
- High in chemovars (strains) from South Africa (Durban Poison, Wowie Gold).

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### Cannabidivarin (CBDV):

- Under investigation as an anticonvulsant for partial onset seizures and is promising as a therapeutic for seizure control (Hill et al., 2010).
- Phase II human trials show around a 40% decrease in focal seizures when treated with CBDV (Brodie et al., 2021).

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### Tetrahydrocannabinolic Acid (THC-A):

- THC-A is the unheated cannabis flower and when decarboxylated converts to active THC.
- Anti-inflammatory and anti-TNF-alpha (Verheeks, 2006), and potentially good for autoimmune disorders.
- Anticonvulsant (Russo, 2016).
- Can stimulate appetite and reduce pain.
- I consider this a cannabenzos because it is great for anxiety relief without the negative side-effects.
- THC-A is psychoactive but not intoxicating.

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### Cannabidiolic Acid (CBD-A):

- Prominent phytocannabinoid in fresh hemp.
- Natural herbicide (Shoyama, 2008).
- Produces COX-inhibition at high doses (Takeda, 2008).
- Powerful antiemetic via 5-HT1a stimulation (Bolognini, 2013; Rock, 2013).

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## Cannabinol (CBN):

- CBN is a non-enzymatic byproduct of THC oxidation (Jin et al., 2019).
- Mildly sedative (Musty, 1976).
- Anticonvulsant (Turner, 1980).
- Anti-inflammatory (Evans, 1991).
- Antibiotic (McPartland & Russo, 2001).

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## Cannabis Constituents:

Friedelin	Epifridelanol	(+)-Cannabisavine	Anhydrocannabisavine
Canniprene	Cannflavin A	Cannabisin B	N-Trans-Caffeoyltyramine

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## Terpenes the true heroes of Cannabis:

Terpenes are plant oils that give cannabis its unique flavor and aroma.

Most of the medical benefits of cannabis are mediated by terpene and cannabinoid interactions with each one having its own pharmacology and mechanism of action. There are hundreds of terpenoids in the cannabis plant.

<b>LINALOOL</b> lavender, rosewood	<b>LIMONENE</b> citrus, peppermint	<b>PINENE</b> pine, rosemary
<b>MYRCENE</b> mango, hops	<b>TERPINOLENE</b> sage, nutmeg	<b>CARYOPHYLLENE</b> cloves, pepper

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## Common Cannabis Terpenes:

Alpha-Pinene	Beta-Myrcene	D-Limonene	D-Linalool	Ocimene
Terpinolene	B-Caryophyllene	Humulene	Nerolidol	

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## Alpha-Pinene Benefits:

- Most widely produced terpene in nature; pine trees (Noma, 2010).
- Anti-inflammatory (Gil et al., 1989).
- 40% bioavailability via inhalation (Falk, 1990), and is a bronchodilator.
- Wide spectrum antibiotic (Nissen, 2010).
- Acetylcholinesterase; prevents the breakdown of acetylcholine and reduces that short-term memory loss due to THC (Perry et al., 2000; Miyazawa, 2005); and can modulate the effect of too much THC (Russo, 2011).
- Good for mood uplift and concentration.

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## Beta-Myrcene Benefits:

- Found in mangos, hops, lemongrass, thyme.
- Sedative (Wichtl, 2004), and muscle relaxing (do Vale et al., 2002) and contributes to the "couch lock" associated with relaxing chemovars (Russo, 2011).
- Pain management and is shown to reduce pain for longer than morphine (Paula-Freire, 2012).

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Strong antidepressant (Komori et al., 1995).

**D-Limonene**

**Benefits:**

Breast cancer cell death in Phase II trials (Vigushin et al., 1998); and works against Bcl-2 colon cancer (Chidambara Murthy, 2012).

Reduces inflammation and decreased IL-6 inflammatory markers in humans (d'Alessio, 2013).

Agonist for adenosine A2a receptors (regulates release of glutamate and dopamine), and synergizes with THC and CBD (Carrier, 2006) for treatment of pain, depression, and Parkinson's.

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**D-Linalool**

**Benefits:**

Found in lavender.

Sedative via inhalation (Buchbauer et al., 1993).

Anticonvulsant & anti-glutamaneric (Elisabetsky et al., 1995).

Anti-anxiety (Russo, 2001).

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Found commonly in West Coast and Dutch chemovars.

**Ocimene**

**Benefits:**

Found in basil.

Antifungal, anticonvulsant, and can act as an expectorant.

Low boiling point (more on that later).

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**Terpinolene**

**Benefits:**

Can reduce pain perception and inflammatory markers for rheumatoid arthritis (Macedo, 2016).

Reduced short-term memory loss associated with THC and can be more stimulating in cannabis (Bonesi, 2010).

Antifungal (Aydin, 2013).

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Acts also as a cannabinoid due to selectively binding to CB2 receptors (Gertsch, 2008).

**Beta-Caryophyllene**

**Benefits:**

Gastro-protective (Tambe et al., 1996).

Decreased cocaine administration (Bahí, 2014), and is the best terpene cannabis has to offer in reducing cravings and drug-seeking behavior.

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**Humulene**

**Benefits:**

Found in hops

Anti-inflammatory (Fernandes et al., 2007)

Works as an appetite suppressant and can reduce THC induced munchies.

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**Nerolidol Benefits:**

Found in ginger, jasmine, lavender, and lemongrass.

Sedative and good for insomnia (Musty et al., 1976).

Anti-anxiety.

Antimicrobial, anti-parasitic, anti-oxidant, and pain relieving (Chan et al., 2016).

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Here is a picture of a ninja-unicorn riding a T-Rex:



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**The Entourage Effect**

The "entourage effect", is the suggested positive contribution derived from the addition of terpenes to the effect of cannabinoids (Russo, 2017). Meaning that the entirety of effect is greater than the sum of its contributing parts (Ferber et al., 2020).

Russo, 2019 described the concept of botanical synergy, in which a dominant molecule is supported by other plant derivatives - cannabinoids, terpenes, flavonoids and other inactive substances, to achieve a maximal pharmacological effect

Simply put, the specific mixture of cannabinoids and terpenes can contribute to the positive benefits of cannabis-based medications.

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**Methods of Consumption:**

Combustion by way of joint, pipe, water pipe.	Vaporization: Preferred method of inhalation.	Topical
Edible via chocolate, candy, beverages.	Tincture based: Best for full-spectrum CBD use.	Concentrates: Cannabis oil, wax, shatter.

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**Differences between Recreational and Medical Cannabis:**

Recreational is primary focused on levels of THC and less on the Entourage Effect and terpenes.

Medical cannabis tests for cannabinoids and terpenes to provide more accurate information for patient health management.

Medical more focused on symptom relief and recreational more on social or relaxing effects.

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**New Mexico Qualifying Conditions:**

- Alzheimer's Disease
- Amotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Cancer
- Crohn's Disease
- Damage to the Nervous Tissue of the Spinal Cord (with objective neurological indication of intractable spasticity).
- Epilepsy/Seizure Disorder
- Friedreich's Ataxia
- Glaucoma
- Hepatitis C Infection currently receiving antiviral therapy
- HIV/AIDS
- Hospice Care
- Huntington's disease
- Inclusion Body Myositis
- Intractable Nausea/Vomiting
- Inflammatory Autoimmune-mediated Arthritis
- Lewy Body Disease
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Obstructive Sleep Apnea
- Opioid Use Disorder
- Painful Peripheral Neuropathy
- Parkinson's disease
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Severe Anorexia/Cachexia
- Severe Chronic Pain
- Spasmodic Torticollis (Cervical Dystonia)
- Spinal Muscular Atrophy
- Ulcerative Colitis

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## Cannabis and Medication Interactions:

- CBD has been shown to affect in vivo and in vitro metabolism of drugs by inhibiting hepatic P450s in the 2C and 3A subtypes (Jaeger et al., 1996; Bornheim & Grillo, 1998).
- If a cannabinoid inhibits a CYP enzyme, then the metabolism of other drugs will be delayed, and their levels may increase. If a cannabinoid induces a CYP enzyme, causing more of the enzyme to be made, this will shorten the lifespan of another drug that is a substrate for the same CYP (Devitt-Lee, 2018).

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## Cannabinoid Drug Interactions:

- Warfarin: Cannabinoids inhibit CYP2C9- mediated metabolism of Warfarin and can cause elevated international normalized ratio (INR) and bleeding (Damkier et al., 2018).
- Cannabinoids can mix to various effects with other drugs causing a multitude of potential side-effects (Antonioni et al., 2020; Cox et al., 2019).
- Gabapentin: Gabapentin and cannabis have similar mechanism of action by way of affecting the action potential of neurons (Atwal et al., 2018), and for some people may experience unpleasant side-effects.

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