



Treating PTSD

For many Americans, most of them veterans, CBD is an urgently needed resource offering a chance at a return to normalcy.

To some people whose experience with cannabis includes anxiety and paranoia or horror stories of the same from well-meaning authority figures, the idea of using cannabinoids to treat post-traumatic stress disorder might seem slightly off. For thousands of combat veterans who are tired of the harder drugs offered by the VA, a federal agency, medical cannabis and CBD in particular has become a rare lifeline.

“Over the last decade, patients have slowly started telling me they were using marijuana successfully to manage their PTSD symptoms,” Arizona psychiatrist Sue Sisley, who has logged more than two decades of time treating PTSD patients—and happens to be a self-described “lifelong Republican”—told *Newsweek* in 2015. “I was extremely dubious at the beginning. I was thinking these guys are just drug-seeking,” Sisley says. “I am trained in a very conservative medical field, where we only cover FDA-approved medicine. So for me to hear all these reports, it was discouraging, and I felt like a failure because they had to

resort to this highly dangerous drug. Then slowly I stopped being so judgmental and started really listening to them.

“All we have now is Zoloft and Paxil,” continued Sisley. “And if you know much about those meds, you know there are many side effects and they often don’t work. If they are effective, then patients are dealing with these side effects like weight gain and sexual dysfunction,” Sisley adds. “Vets come home from service, and they just want to reintegrate into their family. And we make them fat and impotent and mired in a bunch of disabling side effects.... One of the things I kept hearing from people was it would be negligent to use the medical marijuana law because there is not enough research. I would keep telling them in the meantime, people are suffering and they need safe legal access.” Luckily, as of 2018, federal regulations seem to be softening on CBD at least, which could lead to changes in the VA’s current stance on CBD: that it’s the same as and indistinguishable from the cannabis flower, a Schedule I drug.

PATIENTS SPEAK

In addition to migraines, cannabis advocate and internet personality Madison Ortiz suffers from PTSD, and finds relief in cannabinoids.

What would you say to someone who is skeptical about CBD’s therapeutic value?

It’s responsible to question everything! CBD has the potential to offer great therapeutic benefit,

but it’s important to be an educated consumer because: Not all CBD products are equal; the way something (CBD) is consumed determines its function; and everyone reacts to things (CBD) differently.

What do you think future research about CBD will reveal?

I envision science teaching us

enough about our endocannabinoid systems that it becomes a cultural norm to consume external cannabinoids similarly to vitamins and essential nutrients. Beyond CBD being incorporated into our daily nutrition, research will help validate specific symptoms and conditions that can benefit from higher-dose, full-spectrum CBD regimens.

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