

Abstract

SITUATION: Multiple sclerosis belongs to the most common chronic neurological disease of the central nervous system. The disease is incurable, however it is treatable. Modern medicine has a variety of medications to relieve the symptoms and slowing the onset and progression. In many cases, however, treatment is not effective and often causes side effects. Cannabis and its products are used in the symptomatic and causal therapy of many diseases. The efficacy of cannabis treatment in multiple sclerosis is confirmed by several studies. Medical cannabis is a way how to relieve pain and muscle spasms. In 2013 in the Czech Republic there have been changes in laws allowing prescribing cannabis for medical treatment.

OBJECTIVES: The study's goal is to describe the issues of self-medication using medical cannabis from the perspective of people suffering from multiple sclerosis. The primary objective is to map the following areas: introduction to cannabis and motivation to self-medication, frequency and methods of self-medication, therapeutic effects experienced during self-medication, side effects experienced during self-medication, perspectives of cannabis use in the future.

METHODOLOGY: Self-selection in combination with snowball sampling method was used to obtain survey respondents. Data in this study were obtained using the so-called semi-structured interviews. Data collection took place during October and November 2014.

SAMPLE: Research sample consists of people who were contacted and then selected according to predetermined criteria. The survey includes only persons who meet the following criteria: diagnosed with multiple sclerosis according to ICD-10, declared cannabis use, age between 20 and 60 years, and agreed to participate in research. The study included a total of 10 respondents, 7 women and 3 men.

RESULTS: Gathered information indicates recurring patterns of attitudes, experience and opinions of people suffering from multiple sclerosis in connection with their cannabis self-medication.

CONCLUSION: Findings on cannabis self-medication can be a stimulus for reflection or discussion on medical use of cannabis in the coming years as well as inspiration for healthcare workers who would treat multiple sclerosis patients on individual basis and in choosing medication they would take into account what patients themselves observe. Correctly indicated cannabis treatment can be effective for patients dealing with their difficulties.

KEYWORDS: Cannabis, Cannabinoid-based drugs, medical use, medical effects, self-medication, multiple sclerosis