

Medical Cannabis – An Update

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With more than 500 identified constituents *Cannabis sativa* L. (hemp, Cannabaceae) is one of the chemically most elucidated plant. Delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD) are the cannabinoids in focus whereas mainly terpenoids are part of the non-cannabinoid fraction. Most of the pharmacological effects of cannabis are due to interference with the endocannabinoid system. Despite a plethora of therapeutic effects cannabis and cannabinoids should not be classified as panacea. The still existing discrepancy between empirical (what patients claim from self-treatment) and evidence-based knowledge (what doctors and pharmacists know by education and experience in practice) requires a better interdisciplinary scientific bridging and clinical trials targeting the most promising indications. However, research and use of cannabis and cannabinoid-based medications pose different challenges, such as its complex pharmacokinetics, ideal formulation, safe application mode, and supply. Controversially debated are pros and cons of the two therapeutic options, i.e. «full spectrum» (e.g. cannabis flower extracts) and «single compound» (isolated or synthesized pure THC, CBD). Pharmacopoeia monographs to define quality and industry standards, and appropriate regulatory and legal measure are needed to facilitate the controlled access to medical cannabis, a powerful therapeutic tool still discriminated and ignored by too many countries and medical professionals.