



Cannabis Uses in Palliative Care: The Context of Canada and Thailand

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Commentary

The need for palliative care is increasing rapidly in the world. The main symptom in palliative care patients is cancer pain. Some people have identified pain as the fifth vital sign. In recent years, some countries have experimented with some products from cannabis to use for pain relief in palliative care patients whose pain cannot be controlled by opioids or who cannot tolerate some opioid side effects. One such country is Canada, although they still have many limitations for the using of Cannabis-Based Medicines (CBM) due to the lack of research about using cannabis in humans. A systematic review found mixed results concerning CBM in palliative care patients. Fifteen (15) of 18 trials reviewed found that CBMs could not relieve pain in patients with advanced cancer. The Canadian College of Family Physicians does not recommend using CBMs as a first line treatment for cancer pain, but only when opioids and other pain control measures can not relieve a patient's pain adequately, when CBMs can be prescribed as an adjunct to other analgesics. Some trials found that although CBDs cannot relieve cancer pain in advanced cancer patients, they can relieve other advanced cancer symptoms such as fatigue or nausea and vomiting. Recently in Canada cannabis was legalized, and studies are being undertaken to try to confirm the benefits of CBMs.

In Thailand, we have passed laws allowing the growth of cannabis for medical purposes. However, at present this is a big issue in Thailand, as cannabis can also be easily grown by people who do not have a license for selling as an addictive drug, which can bring harm to Thai people. On the other hand, this is an opportunity to do more research about cannabis and try to find the benefits from cannabis in Thailand, especially in my field of palliative care, such as using cannabis for other symptoms besides pain such as relieving fatigue and increasing patient's appetite.

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Received Date: 06 Jun 2019

Accepted Date: 08 Jul 2019

Published Date: 11 Jul 2019

Citation:

Fumaneeshoat O. Cannabis Uses in Palliative Care: The Context of Canada and Thailand. *Ann Palliat Care Med.* 2019; 1(1): 1001.

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