

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release:

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Eighty Percent of People Who Used Cannabis for Parkinson's Disease Found Symptom Relief *Survey Also Found Reluctance to Tell Physicians*

PENNINGTON, New Jersey — November 29, 2022 — Nearly 80 percent of people who used cannabis to treat symptoms of Parkinson's Disease found "great relief" or "a little relief," according to research by the Cannabis Education and Research Institute ([CERI](https://ceri.usa.org)) and The College of New Jersey.

In the survey of about 500 people with Parkinson's disease who have used cannabis, 31 percent reported "great relief" in the treatment; 48 percent found a "little relief"; and 15 percent found cannabis made no difference in their symptoms. Meanwhile, about five percent said they felt a little or a lot worse.

Those who found value in cannabis reported benefits such as pain relief, reduced tremors, lessened anxiety, and better sleep.

CERI, with a mission to promote research and knowledge of medicinal cannabis, supported the study to gain insight into the experiences of people with Parkinson's using cannabis for medicinal purposes.

"The pharmacologic medicines we have to treat Parkinson's Disease are excellent, but not completely sufficient, especially for the non-motor symptoms such as sleep, anxiety and pain that can impact patients' quality of life," said [Jill M. Giordano Farmer, D.O., MPH](#), a member of the advisory board of CERI.

"If we have other options then, as a medical community, we must educate ourselves on how these can be utilized safely and effectively. There is limited research into cannabis, and that's why we are gathering these real-time, real-world experiences," Dr. Farmer said.

Dr. Farmer, a board-certified neurologist, is director of the Parkinson's Disease & Movement Disorder Program at Global Neurosciences Institute. She said physicians and

patients can use the study to understand the potential benefits and limitations of cannabis for people living with Parkinson's disease.

The survey breaks down the questions of symptom relief into seven categories:

Pain

- Great or good relief: 51 percent

Nausea

- Great or good relief: 17 percent

Emotional Coping

- Great or good relief: 47 percent

Spasm/tremor

- Great or good relief: 43 percent

Relief through relaxation

- Great or good relief: 73 percent

Anxiety relief

- Great or good relief: 60 percent

Sleep

- Great or good relief: 69 percent

The lead researcher on the project is [Sandy Gibson, PhD, LCSW, LCADC](#), a professor and clinical coordinator in the Department of Counselor Education at The College of New Jersey. CERI also partnered with The Parkinson Alliance and Parkinson's Unity Walk in the study.

"The research confirms that many people are using, or want to use, cannabis — but they are reluctant to share that with their health care professionals," said Carol J. Walton, President & CEO of [The Parkinson Alliance](#). "Many people in the community ask us about cannabis, and we are proud we could be a part of this important survey. We definitely need more research so the medical community has the best data to help their patients make informed decisions."

Through the survey, patients had the opportunity to list specific experiences. "Cannabis helps with my tremors and anxiety," one patient reported. Another said, "Reduces tremors and helps with sleep." Patients reported consuming cannabis in multiple forms, such as in chewable products, tinctures, and by smoking or vaping.

The survey found that for many, cost of cannabis is a barrier to access. People with higher incomes were less likely to cite cost as a barrier to access. The data also show that if health

insurance covered cannabis there would not be a significant difference among medicinal cannabis use and income.

The survey also uncovered reticence among patients to tell their physicians about their cannabis use. About a quarter of Parkinson's patients did not tell their physicians about their cannabis use, citing a myriad of reasons, such as fear their doctor would not approve, or would judge them — or that they were not using cannabis frequently enough to bother.

About three-quarters of patients told their physician about their use of cannabis. They reported that about half of the physicians were very supportive or supportive while the rest (34 percent) were neutral and somewhat (9 percent) unsupportive.

Dr. Farmer noted that people who had never used cannabis before their illness were equally likely to try cannabis medicinally. Prior use did not seem to impact desire to try cannabis medicinally.

Concerning, however, is that just 49 percent of Parkinson's Disease patients have a medicinal marijuana card to purchase legally through alternative treatment centers. More than half do not have a card and are not applying for one.

[David Knowlton, President and CEO of CERI](#), said purchasing cannabis legally insures users of the quality of the product. Legal dispensaries can best help patients find the strains of cannabis that may best help them, especially patients who want to purchase cannabis with low levels of THC, the psychoactive compound in cannabis.

"We encourage medicinal patients to obtain a medicinal marijuana card, discuss their symptoms and cannabis with their physicians, and to purchase cannabis from a legal source," Knowlton said.

He said CERI supports research to help patients and their physicians better understand whether or how cannabis can alleviate symptoms of serious chronic illnesses. "We know that patients living with debilitating illnesses and conditions are turning to cannabis," Knowlton said. "We absolutely must do more to understand their experiences, what we can learn, and how others may be helped."

ABOUT CERI

The Cannabis Education and Research Institute is a non-profit organization based in Pennington, New Jersey. CERI's goal is to advance accessibility of medicinal cannabis through unbiased, evidenced-based research provided to consumers, clinicians, payers and policy makers so they can make informed decisions about cannabis. More information is available at CERIUSA.org.