

Researchers from Tel Aviv University say that smoking a little marijuana could help provide dramatic relief for the elderly who suffer from a variety of chronic ailments.

The scientists tested the effects of marijuana treatment on 19 residents of the Hadarim nursing home in Israel. During the study, the participants reported dramatic physical results, including healthy weight gain and the reduction of pain and tremors.

According to the study authors, the elderly participants also experienced an immediate improvement in their moods and communication skills after smoking cannabis.

Zach Klein, a graduate of Tel Aviv University's Department of Film and Television Studies, said that the use of prescription medications was also significantly reduced as a result of using medical marijuana.

The active ingredient in marijuana THC was first discovered in Israel by professors Raphael Mechoulam and Yechiel Gaoni. Israel is known as the world leader in medical cannabis research, according to Klein.

During the nursing home study, 19 patients between the ages of 69 and 101 were treated with medical cannabis in the form of powder, oil, vapor or smoke three times daily over the course of a year for conditions like chronic pain, lack of appetite, and muscle spasms and tremors.

Both researchers and nursing home staff members monitored participants for signs of improvement in their conditions as well as their overall quality of life.

Seventeen of the study participants achieved a healthy weight during their use of marijuana and experienced a noticeable reduction in pain, muscle spasms, joint stiffness and tremors. Nearly all of the patients using cannabis slept better, longer and had a reduced incidence of nightmares and flashbacks related to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

The researchers also reported a decline in the amount of prescribed medications taken by patients, such as antipsychotics, Parkinson's treatment, mood stabilizers and pain relievers. Towards the end of the study, researchers found that 72 percent of participants were able to reduce their drug intake by an average of 1.7 medications per day.

For the next phase of his research, Klein wants to study the connection between medical cannabis and an improved ability to swallow. Difficulties in swallowing can lead to a decline in nutrition and, ultimately, premature death. He believes that cannabis will have a positive impact on patients suffering from this disorder, which is known in medical jargon as dysphagia.