
CANNABIS AND PAIN

PROFESSOR MIKE BARNES MD FRCP

CHAIR, MEDICAL CANNABIS CLINICIANS SOCIETY



MCCS - ABOUT US



476
MEMBERS

Members are supported by the Expert Committee - international and UK based cannabis experts.

PAIN

- The commonest reason for prescribing cannabis – chronic pain
- About 55% of the 80000 people prescribed – 45000 people

CANNABIS AND PAIN

- Good evidence of efficacy for nabiximols (Sativex), nabilone, oils and vaped cannabis
- Various formulations and methods of inhalation and ingestion all show efficacy
- Various types of pain – neuropathic / post surgical / spasticity / cancer / arthritic / headache / opioid sparing are all helped

THC AND OTHER CANNABINOIDS

- THC is the main analgesic
- But other cannabinoids are also analgesic
- CBN, CBC, CBG, THCV

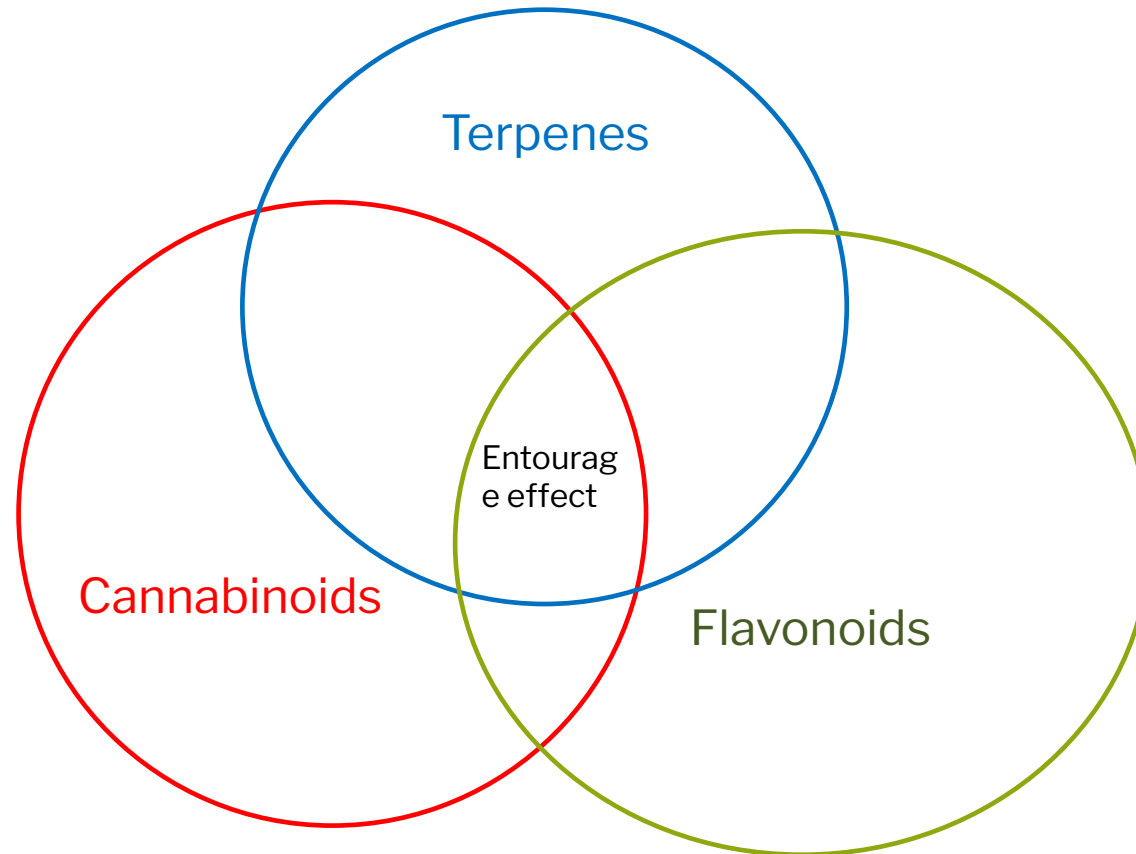
CBD

- CBD aids sleep and anxiety – both of which can exacerbate pain
- CBD is also mildly analgesic
- Thus often some CBD helps as well as THC

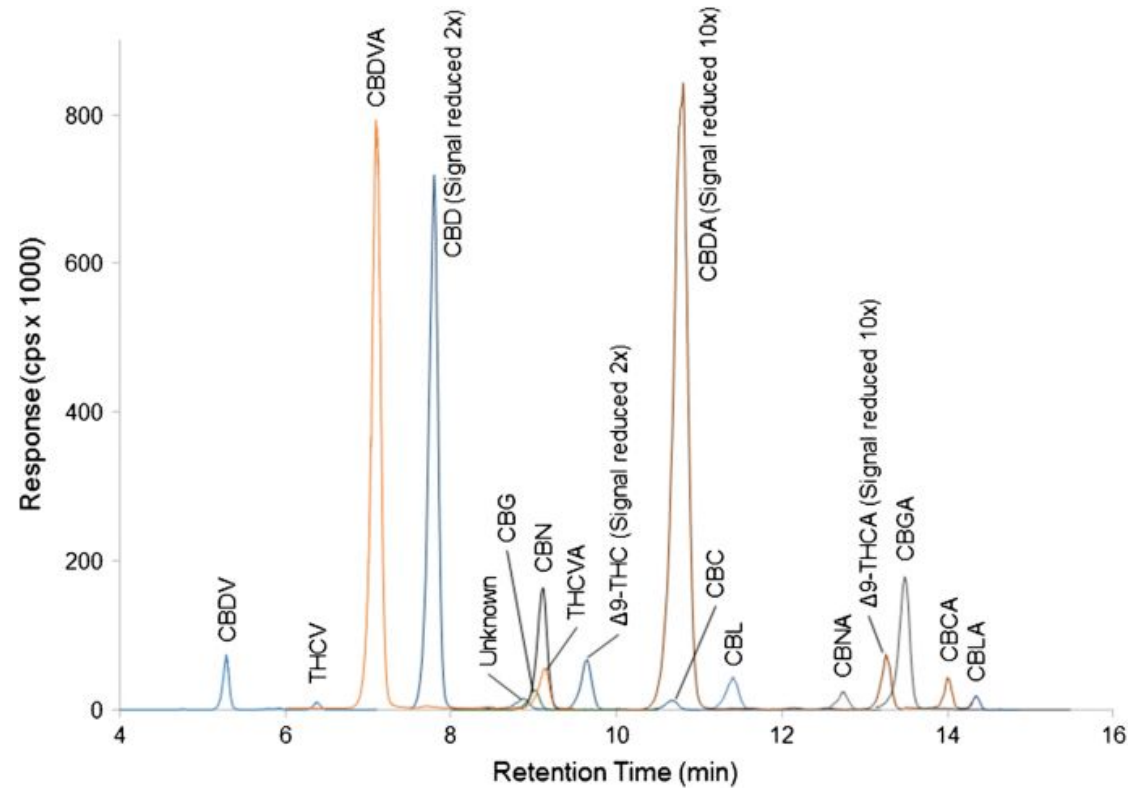
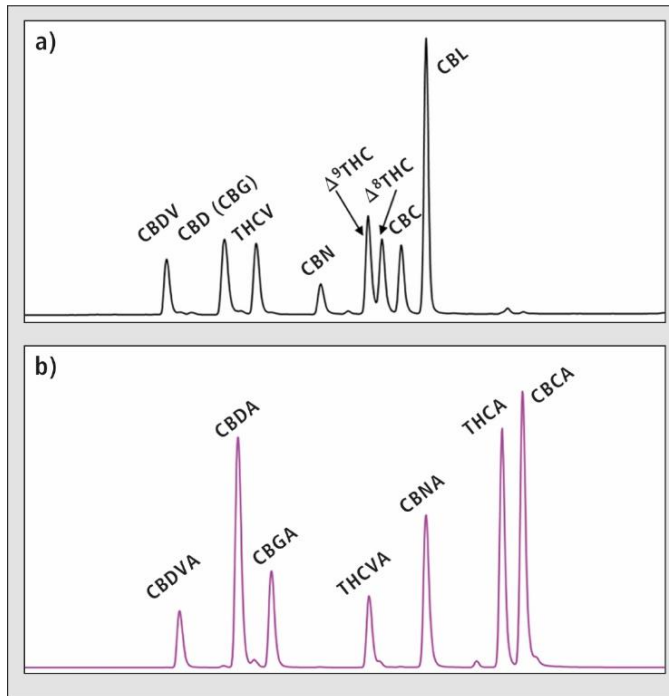
ANALGESIC COMPONENTS OF CANNABIS

- First, we thought just THC and CBD
- Then we considered minor cannabinoids, inc. CBN, CBG, CBC and THCV
- And then terpenes – inc. myrcene, beta caryophyllene, linalool and pinene
- But now flavonoids! – especially vitexin as well as quercetin, luteolin, orientin, apigenin and kaempferol

THE THREE IMPORTANT COMPONENTS

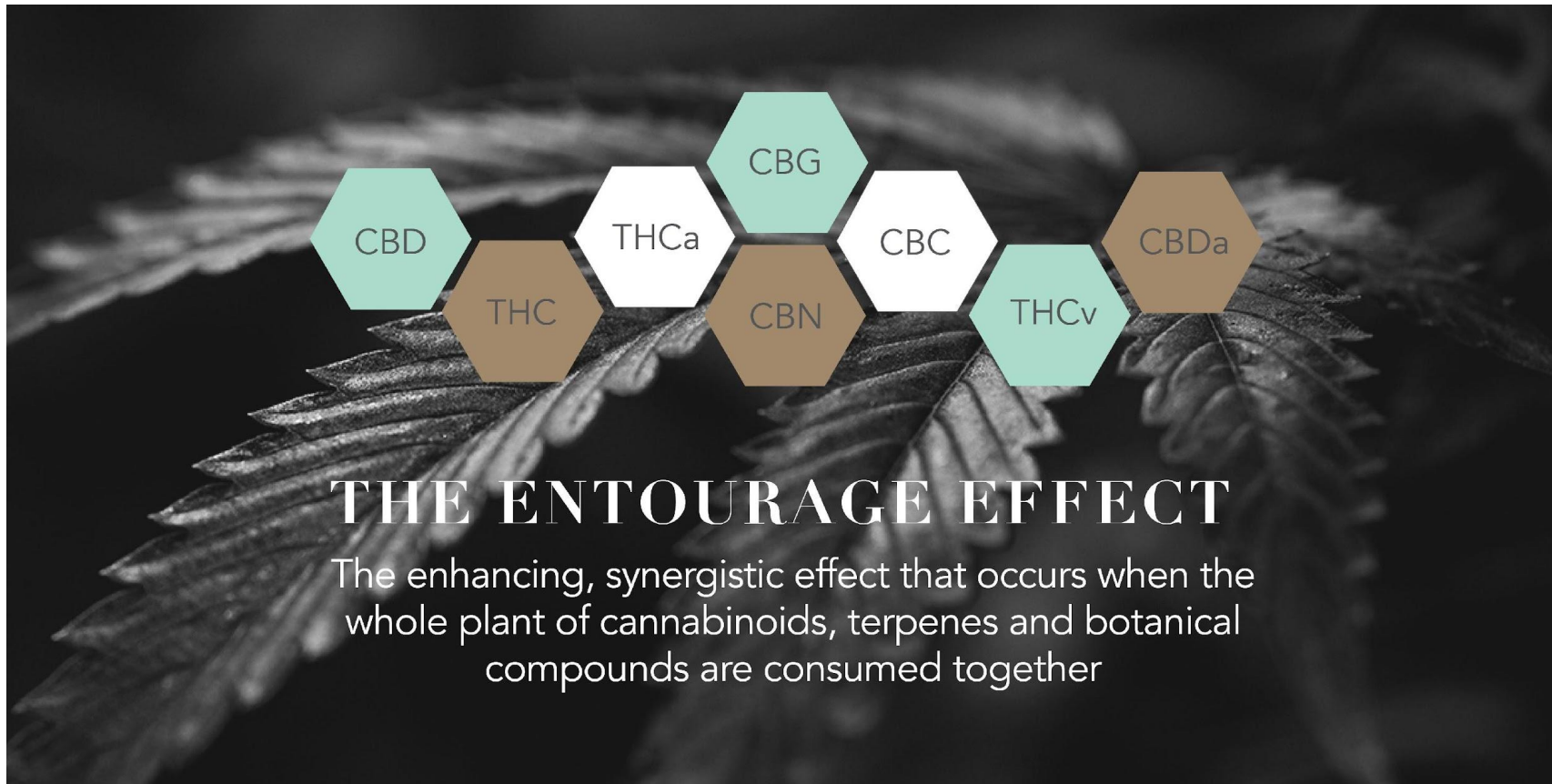


Each Cannabis cultivar has a unique cannabinoid profile



... and therefore, unique biological activity – the chemovar is paramount

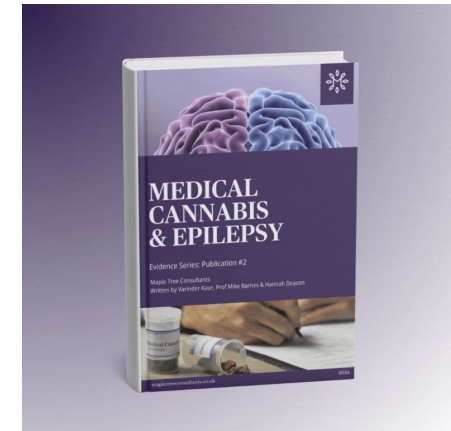
ENTOURAGE EFFECT



So, use a full spectrum product

EVIDENCE

- 125 papers in peer review journals since 1975
- 66 double-blind, placebo-controlled trials
- Total number of patients in these studies – 20,593
- All types of pain
- Mainly focus on THC



EVIDENCE 2 – DOSE THC

- Most studies start at just 1-2mgs THC
- Slow escalation up to, usually, 10-30mgs daily
- Max up to 50mgs daily
- Average 15mgs daily
- No evidence of tolerance – some papers follow-up to 3 years with no drop in efficacy

EVIDENCE 3 - EFFICACY

- The great majority show pain reduction of at least 30%, many show greater reduction
- More if adjunctive
- Most patients reduce opioid dose by about 50%, some able to stop opioids

EVIDENCE 4 – ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

- Improved mood
- Better sleep
- Improved appetite
- Improved muscle relaxation
- Enhanced quality of life

SIDE EFFECTS

- Dizziness, drowsiness
- GI disturbance (diarrhoea, abdominal pain, nausea)
- Dry mouth
- Anxiety / euphoria (THC effect)
- But T21 study shows 97% of people have no side effects at all

DOSE DEPENDENCY

- Is more THC better?
- No
- Straight line relationship between THC % / THC daily dose and pain response

COST EFFECTIVENESS

- Recent paper by CIC / Drug Science / MCCA authors
- CBMPs cost-effective for chronic pain
- CBMPs can save the NHS around £3.97 billion pa
- *Marrinan et al. An early economic analysis of medical cannabis for the treatment of chronic pain.*
- *Expert Rev Pharmacoecon Outcomes Res 2025; 25:39-52*

CONCLUSION

- They work
- They are safe
- Why not use them?
- Simples

Sign up today and get ½ price first
year membership

50%
OFF

Join the Society

Join the UK's independent network of clinicians dedicated to safe, effective and evidence-based cannabis medicine.

- Expert clinical guidance
- CPD-accredited training
- 24/7 peer support
- Independent, unbiased advice
- Resources and tools

“Having an independent network of colleagues working within medical cannabis, sharing information and experiences is vital to developing my understanding of this

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

£120 / £60 / £1

STUDENTS

CRITERIA

Membership is open to all clinicians, nurses, GPs, AHPs, medical students, pharmacists working across acute, primary and community healthcare.

JOIN TODAY

ukmccs.org | contact@ukmccs.org



contact@ukmccs.org

The MCCS is an independent community of cannabis clinicians – the first prescribers of this treatment in the UK.

The Society is an expert-led, not-for-profit community, dedicated to bringing this safe, legal and effective medicine to people living with chronic conditions.