

would be any better in states where cannabis is fully legal, like Nevada.

"I doubt that the results would be any different in states where cannabis use is legalized," he said. "In fact, it may be worse. Until good manufacturing practices are mandated by the FDA/USDA and fully implemented by manufacturers, indifferent quality will be commonplace."

Florida is considering regulations requiring CBD products to be tested by a third party, to carry a label containing a code that allows consumers to go online and get specific information about that product. Hemp farmers would also be required to allow visits from inspectors.

THE WORD GETS OUT

None of the products containing CBD have been approved by the Food and Drug Administration except one—Epidiolex, which can be used only for two epileptic seizures. In addition, it comes with a warning of possible liver damage:

"Epidiolex may cause liver problems. Your doctor may order blood tests to check your liver before you start taking Epidiolex and during treatment. In some cases, Epidiolex treatment may need to be stopped. Call your doctor right away if you start to have any of these signs and symptoms of liver problems during treatment with Epidiolex: loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting[:] fever, feeling unwell, unusual tiredness[:] yellowing of the skin or the whites of the eyes (jaundice) [:] itching[:] unusual darkening of the urine[:] right upper stomach area pain or discomfort."

Epidiolex was approved in June 2018 only on this limited basis to treat people with rare types of epilepsy—Lennox-Gastaut syndrome or Dravet syndrome, which usually afflict children. (In the new study, the scientists employed the Epidiolex guidelines for dosage and safety.)

Firms that sell CBD products cannot say that the substance does anything for people, nor do most of them make such claims. But there are other ways of spreading the word.

For example, at a site called Medical News Today, while there is precautionary language at key points, full use is made of suggestive terms like *potential*, *could* and *may*, as in all these uses on a single page at the site: "Although more research is required to confirm some uses of CBD oil, it is shaping up as a *potentially promising* and versatile treatment. ... However, CBD oil does show a lot of *potential* for pain

relief. Anecdotal evidence *suggests* that it can be used to help manage chronic pain in many cases. CBD oil is especially *promising* due to its lack of intoxicating effects and a *possible* lower potential for side effects than many other pain medications ... The active cannabinoids in cannabis *may* be an active treatment for psoriasis. Research shows that they offer *potential* health benefits that *could* relieve the symptoms of psoriasis." (Emphasis has been added.)

For people desperate for a remedy to agonizing symptoms, such loaded language can implant hope that is not necessarily backed up by existing science.

The site is attributed to "Healthline Media UK Ltd, Brighton, UK" and there is a caveat that undercuts the material therein: "The Medical News Today Content is provided on an "as is" and "as available" basis. Medical News Today gives no warranty of any kind in relation to our Feed or our Content and we disclaim all implied warranties, including, but not limited to, satisfactory quality, fitness for purpose, non-infringement, compatibility and accuracy."

Among the conditions some people claim CBD deals with are pain, anxiety, epilepsy, nausea and hangovers. Those do not explain why it is included in some products, such as beauty treatments. In any event, there is little science behind the claims, and even less knowledge about side effects.

The expertise of some pot shops is suggested by a recent sales pitch sent out to Nevada marijuana merchants: "Whether you or your staff need the best cannabis education, you need to consider signing up for a monthly subscription. Not only do you get videos and audio, but handouts and research articles. Do you know which THC/CBD ratios best treat what condition? Do you know which products are recommended for cancer patients? If you don't know, please subscribe."

Just as uncertain are articles that come with headlines like "CBD Oil Is Amazing For So Many Things, but Breastfeeding Isn't One of Them (Yet)."

Another cautionary instance surfaced in the case of Christina Dixon, who opposed medical treatment for her daughter's cancer and instead wanted to treat her with CBD. After a court order was issued telling her to resume the daughter's medical treatment, she removed the girl from Oregon and fled to Nevada. Clark County officials found them and sent the daughter back to Oregon. □

"Until good manufacturing practices are mandated ... indifferent quality will be commonplace."

Bill Gurley
Scientist



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