MEDICINAL CANNABIS IN ISRAEL, 2015

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Overview of Presentation

- Short description of Israel Medical Cannabis (MC) Program
- Successes & achievements
- Main pitfalls, failures and obstacles
- Ways for improvement the current situation
- Educational and training needs
- Discussion, Conclusions and further directions
The situation in Israel

- During the last 10 years, the cannabis was legalized for some particular severe medical disorders (so called “indications”), such as AIDS and cancer in the stage of cachexia/metastases post-irradiation/chemotherapy nausea/vomiting severe MS or Neuropathic/Phantom Pain, CRPS, rare cases of Parkinson’s Disorder, Epilepsy, Tourette Syndrome, Alzheimer disease, some PTSD and palliative medicine cases.
The situation in Israel

- Under current regulations, all physicians are eligible (in the area of their specialization) to submit the recommendation to grant license for MC, to the MC Authority.
- The MC Authority review the applications and decides in each particular case, if the arguments for this are sufficient to their criteria.
- In general, about a half of all submissions are, finally, approved.
The situation with MC in Israel

- Than, successfully licensed patients are referring by the MC Authority to the one of several official growers/suppliers.

- At that point, patients and their relatives should have some provisionary training, in order to understand better this therapeutical method and have a preliminary attempts to fit them the most appropriate strain and to adjust the way of administration (oil, ointments, direct smoking, vaporizing and/or edibles).
The situation with MC in Israel

- All licensed patients should comply with regulations, requiring mandatory report follow-up visits to the same specialist, who consider to be responsible for their MC treatment.
- The doctors could recommend to MC Authority to increase or reduce the dose of MC supplied.
- Also, from time to time, patients could change a grower, if his’ assortment of MC seems them insufficient for their needs.
The situation with MC in Israel

- Now, the National MC program in Israel has the largest number of patients per population in the world (about 20,000 active licenses).
- Also, Israel consider to be the cannabis (not only medical) research capital of the world, mostly due to the renowned works of the grandfather of the marijuana research Prof. Raphael Mechoulam (Hebrew University, Jerusalem) and the large group of his fellows and collaborators.
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- So, we gained our clinical experience from the numerous patients and now we are much better could define and, sometimes, predict the chances for success in each particular case.

- We created the public atmosphere, where Israeli physicians are not afraid any more to discuss cannabis-related issues, in conjunction with the treatment applications.
Assessment of Israeli Physicians’ Knowledge, Experience and Attitudes towards Medical Cannabis: A Pilot Study

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ABSTRACT: Background: Cannabis has been used throughout history for different purposes but was outlawed in the United States in 1937; many countries followed suit. Although recently reintroduced as a medical treatment option, there is a need for further study in most countries around the world. The United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961) ratified the legal status of cannabis as an illicit drug with no therapeutic potential, thereby eradicating the medical use of cannabis [2].
The situation with MC in Israel

- However, the medical community in generally reluctant to larger extension of the MC usage.
- Recent study found that most of the Israeli physicians participated in this study were in favor of cannabis use for medical purposes, acknowledging its legitimacy as a therapeutic agent for some medical indications.
- The majority physicians decline to prescribe MC to patients directly, delegating this function to the MC Authority.
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\textbf{ABSTRACT:} Background: Cannabis has been used throughout history for different purposes but was outlawed in the United States in 1937; many countries followed suit. Although recently reintroduced as a medical treatment in several countries for a variety of purposes, cannabis is still considered an illegal drug in most countries around the world. The United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961) ratified the legal status of cannabis as an illicit drug with no therapeutic potential, thereby eradicating the medical use of cannabis [2].
The situation with MC in Israel

- Physicians agree unanimously that more education and professional training on MC is eagerly needed and should be readily available.

- Nowadays the situation with MC in Israel could be described as transitional, as soon as the new regulations (which were elaborated solely by The MC Authority, simply ignoring us – cannabis-practicing physicians and patients representatives) was published just yesterday and should be carefully learned.
Main drawbacks

- In Israel about 300,000 permanent cannabis users. At least half of them use cannabis for the medical purposes. Only about 15% of them already licensed and have a legal access!

- The majority of health care professionals are not ready to put the usage of cannabis (in all the forms possible) in their clinical practices

- We assume that this phenomenon represents the main obstacle/barrier towards the wider usage of cannabis/marijuana for various medical purposes.
What to do?

- The best way in order to see a change in the attitude towards medical cannabis/marijuana would be by training the different professionals, doctors, nurses, pharmacists etc to practice the use of marijuana.
We have a lot to do:

- to improve relationships with patients’ organizations and with suppliers/growers;
- to organize systematic learning and training for interested health care practitioners etc.
- We hope, that the recent clinical and scientific advances and our success with the cannabis-treated patients will attract more physicians and other health care practitioners to be involved in MC, which inevitably will allow us to promote National MC program in Israel to the new achievements.
The idea is to create the awareness in all the different stages: from colleges, medical schools and universities' benches through to internships and residencies in order to create specialists /certified professionals in Cannabinoid Medicine
Thank you for your attention!
Any questions/commentaries?