

World Alzheimer's Month: Medical Cannabis Research Continues



September is [World Alzheimer's Month](#), a yearly campaign by Alzheimer's Disease International that aims to raise awareness of Alzheimer's disease and challenge the stigma associated with dementia in all of its forms. Alzheimer's is a fatal and irreversible disease that destroys brain cells, causing loss of memory and cognitive abilities. One in 10 North Americans age 65 and older develop Alzheimer's.

Several preliminary medical research projects suggest that medical cannabis can alleviate some of the symptoms of the disease and improve patients' quality of life. For example, a 2016 lab study by the [Salk Institute](#) found that certain cannabinoids remove plaque-forming Alzheimer's proteins from brain cells. Other small clinical trials have indicated that different cannabinoids can decrease agitation and improve appetite in Alzheimer's patients. Still more studies show an increase in memory function and a decrease in cognitive impairment and indicate that certain cannabinoids help maintain blood flow to the brain, increasing oxygenation, nutrients, and glucose as well as decreasing inflammation.

However, according to the [Alzheimer Society Canada](#), there is still a lack of conclusive medical evidence on the efficacy of medical cannabis for patients with Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia. Fortunately, research continues around the world. Here are a few current projects we're tracking at JMCC that are exploring the potential benefits of medical cannabis for Alzheimer's and dementia patients.

[University of Alberta, Canada](#)

A partnership between Atlas Biotechnologies and the University of Alberta is seeking, among other things, to discover whether medical cannabis can be used for the treatment of Alzheimer's. The research is focused on developing a better understanding of how cannabis affects neurological conditions and treatment options for Alzheimer's. The

research will be led by University of Alberta Department of Pharmacology scientists who are also members of the Neuroscience and Mental Health Institute.

[University of Notre Dame, Australia](#)

The University of Notre Dame, Australia is currently undertaking an industry-sponsored phase 2 clinical trial to explore how cannabis can reduce some of the symptoms and adverse behaviours in dementia patients, including agitation, aggression, disruptive sleep and loss of appetite. The study's goal is to determine whether cannabis can improve overall quality of life for patients, as well as their loved ones and caregivers.

[University of Toronto, Canada](#)

The Alzheimer Society Canada has awarded Charlene Chu of the University of Toronto a three-year research grant for a pilot study on seniors with dementia living at home and the effects of cannabidiol (CBD) oil on their physiology, behaviour and function. Chu's research is exploring quality-of-life improvements such as enhanced mobility and function through the use of CBD oil.

At JMCC, we hope that more of this kind of research can scientifically establish the efficacy of medical cannabis as a treatment for sufferers of Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia – at the least to improve quality of life for patients and those who care for them.