

PFCA

Wellness Update

PRINCETON FAMILY CARE ASSOCIATES, LLC

FALL 2022



Message from Dr. Fernandez

Fall arrives with our quarterly newsletter. As we recover from the COVID Pandemic, I am now requiring that patients be seen in-person at least yearly so that we are able to obtain clinical parameters which optimize your treatment (such as vital signs). Also, a face-to-face (3D) assessment goes a long way towards comprehensive care.

Ms. Trapani-Barnacz, our competent and highly trained Advanced Practice Nurse (APN), is now handling most of the day-to-day practice responsibilities under my supervision. I am now undertaking most of the evaluations and I also review all charts after visits by patients with the APN's. I am now in the office on Wednesdays for ad-

ministrative matters, and to be available to speak to referring clinicians and supervising APNs.

In closing, we also have articles for your ongoing education on the latest in Cannabis use in our current culture as well as on the benefits and risks of anxiety medicine and sleep medicines in the elder patient population.

As long as the practice is under my name, my vision will always be to provide exemplary clinical care to our patients with the goal of you not just being "better" but being "well".

Enjoy the Fall as we head into the seasonal holidays.

Dr. Fernandez

What You Need to Know About Delta-8 THC

Marisa Fernandez, PFCA Psychiatric Technician

You may be aware that there are hundreds of cannabinoids found in the cannabis plant, most common being THC and CBD, but did you know that there are multiple types of THC? The most common form of THC, which is the primary psychoactive ingredient in cannabis, is known as delta-9 THC. This article will explore delta-8 THC, a "gentler and legal high" that seems to offer relaxation and pain relief, without the anxiety or "fuzzy-headedness" associated with delta-9 THC. Delta-8 is

currently legal as it is extracted specifically from hemp, and not cannabis.

Delta-8 THC, which is found in trace amounts in cannabis, is almost chemically identical to delta-9 THC and thereafter metabolized similarly in the body. Delta-8 and delta-9 THC bind to the same endocannabinoid receptor, known as the cannabinoid type 1 (CB1) receptor, however, delta-8 has a slightly weaker attachment to the CB1 receptor. Due to

Sedative-Hypnotic Medications in Older Population

Marisa Fernandez

Although sedative-hypnotic medications are beneficial in the treatment of insomnia and anxiety, they are not without risks. Individuals can develop a tolerance to their effect, they can cause unwanted side effects, and one can also become dependent on their use. Use of sedative-hypnotic medications in the older population is a particular concern. As we age, medications remain longer and longer in the body. Diminished liver function and poor blood flow to your kidneys may increase side effects, such as weakness, daytime sedation, sleep walking, and balance impairment.

If you are taking a sedative-hypnotic medication and experiencing any of the above side effects, it is important that you bring it to your clinician's attention! Your clinician may be able to recommend an alternative medication with a lesser risk of side effect or may recommend certain lifestyle changes to help with sleep and anxiety to minimize your need for the medications.

If you are planning to stop your sedative-hypnotic medication, you will need to follow a dosing schedule to slowly come off the medication under the supervision of your clinician. Abrupt discontinuation of these medications can result in recurrence of symptoms, which we refer to as rebound insomnia and rebound anxiety.

If interested in learning more about sedation-hypnotic medications, click on this link to read more.

Continued on page 2

Many Progressive Changes at PFC A

We are excited to announce that Adria Trapani-Barnacz is now a fully credentialed Advance Practice Nurse. As of July 18, 2022 she started her new role as APN Clinical Coordinator. In this role she works closely with Dr. Fernandez and oversees the day-to-day clinical issues for the practice, including medication orders, prior authorizations, urgent patient care needs, and collaboration with family and ancillary providers. She is also instrumental in directing content for the practice quarterly patient newsletter. She will be available in the office 5 days a week as well as covering after hours and weekends for emergency and urgencies that can not wait until the next business day.

In accommodating these staffing changes, *Ms. Uche O'Keem will no longer be working for the practice. Her last day of patient care will be October 25, 2022.* Patients that have been treated by Ms. O'Keem will be transferred to either Adria Trapani-Barnacz, APN or Raquel Rahim, APN. Both clinicians have later appointment times one day a week to accommodate evenings appointments as much as possible.

Another change to our practice, as we move into the post pandemic world, is that Dr. Fernandez will require patients to return to the office for face-to-face appointment visits at least twice annually to assess vital signs and to physically see patients. This policy starts this September 2022. Some patients have already returned to in person visits out of personal preference. Procedures for in person visits consist of a pre-appointment questionnaire to assess risk, exposure and vaccine status, pre-appointment call from the parking lot to ensure adequate seating space in our waiting room, temperature checking and mask wearing in our office suite. Vaccines for office visits are necessary at this time unless Dr. Fernandez advised otherwise. Additionally, we have equipped our office with ionic air purifiers with UV lights, plexiglass shields in clinical offices and at the reception desk and the staff disinfects high traffic areas periodically during the day. Thank you in advance for helping us ensure everyone's safety while we transition back to in person appointments

DELTA 8 THC *continued from page 1*

this weaker attachment, delta-8 has similar, but milder psychoactive effects compared to delta-9 THC.

Indeed, a survey of delta-8 users report feeling less paranoid, less anxious, and having a "nicer" high compared to delta-9 THC. These users also reported that they were able to remain productive when using delta-8 THC, whereas users of delta-9 report it can inhibit their productivity, as delta-9 THC causes much more dissociation and impaired function.

There are concerns about delta-8 THC, however, since the intoxication is milder, there is a tendency to minimize its potential for harm, and, as such, there have been a number of accidental poisonings, particularly among younger teens and kids, because of its accessibility. The other concern is that since production is not FDA/state regulated (as is with state licensed dispensaries), there is potential for contamination. Several studies have found contaminants in delta-8 samples, including other cannabinoids, like delta-9 THC, and high levels of lead and mercury (heavy metals which can be used in extracting delta-8 THC from hemp).

Because of these two issues, the lack of regulation around delta-8 is a great concern for public health experts. As a result, 14 states have banned delta-8 or all unregulated forms of THC. Public health experts, including those in support of legalization of marijuana, recommend against delta-8 use at this time, until we have more reliable data. We also advise caution at this time.

Source: Smith, D. (2022). How Delta-8 THC Works—and Why Experts Are Worried About It. The New York Times. Retrieved from: What Is Delta-8, and Why Is It So Popular? - The New York Times (nytimes.com)

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