HOW MEDICAL CANNABIS CAN HELP INSOMNIA

Do you have constant sleepless nights? And no matter what you do, you can’t get to sleep (or stay asleep)? – Maybe you have insomnia. Before we jump to conclusions, let’s understand what insomnia is...

What is Insomnia?

Insomnia is the most common sleep disorder and is among the most prevalent of mental health disorders. The International Classification of Sleep Disorders defines insomnia as difficulty initiating or maintaining sleep on three or more nights per week for at least three months. People with insomnia can feel dissatisfied with their sleep and usually experience the following symptoms: fatigue, low energy, difficulty concentrating, mood disturbances, and decreased performance in work or at school¹.

Australian surveys have shown that 13-33% of the adult population have regular difficulty getting to sleep or staying asleep². 70-90% of Insomnia disorders usually occur in the context of another disorder or medical problem such as anxiety, depression, and posttraumatic stress disorder, stroke, pain, cardiovascular disease, diabetes or asthma³. In Australia, the financial

burden and indirect costs associated with insomnia were estimated to be $AU $1.5 billion in 2010⁴.

**Are there treatments available?**

Current treatments of insomnia include non-pharmacological treatments such as cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT-i) and pharmacotherapies. CBT-i is a behavioural therapy that targets psychological, behavioural and cognitive factors that may have developed during insomnia or contributed to its development. CBT-i is very effective and considered to be the gold standard in treating insomnia⁵.

However, individual face-to-face CBT is typically delivered by a trained health professional which makes it expensive, labour intensive and less accessible. Pharmacotherapeutic approaches include using drugs such as benzodiazepines (BZD) and non-BZD hypnotics, however the side effects from long term use of these drug including abuse potential, dependence, tolerance, daytime sedation, increased risk of psychomotor impairment, including falls especially in older people and increased risk of cognitive impairment, have led to new treatment approaches⁵.

**How can medical cannabis help?**

The use of cannabis has been used medicinally for thousands of years in China and India, but recently the plant derived cannabinoids, known as phytocannabinoids, have been gaining interest due to anecdotal clinical studies and more recently clinical trials in diseases including epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, chemotherapy induced nausea and vomiting, pain, and sleep disorders.

Cannabinol (CBN) is also another cannabinoid which is a product of degradation or oxidation of THC shown to have sleep inducing effects in mice and research suggests that the improvements in sleep seen with THC are even greater when CBN is combined with THC⁶.

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Who is Zelda Therapeutics and how are they involved?

Zelda Therapeutics (Zelda) is an Australian listed company (ASX:ZLD) engaged in preclinical and clinical research of its cannabis based products for the treatment of specific medical disorders, including insomnia. The company will undertake clinical trials in Australia and Chile with their medicinal cannabis product for the treatment of chronic insomnia in adults. To undertake clinical trials, Zelda must submit its proposed processes and research to various regulatory bodies (including ethics committees) for approval.

Zelda Therapeutics should have results from its clinical trials by the end of the year, and with positive results in hand it will then move quickly to register its products for marketing and distribution purposes, expected in 2018.

So if you are suffering from insomnia and are wanting a natural alternative to the drugs currently available in the market, stay tuned for more updates or visit www.zeldatherapeutics.com.