

Study: Pot may help with depression

By Carolyn Gregoire, Huffington Post

Research has suggested that cannabis may be a promising treatment option for a number of different physical and mental health conditions, from post-traumatic stress disorder to chronic pain. A study released last week suggests that depression can be added to that list.

Neuroscientists from the University of Buffalo's Research Institute on Addictions found that endocannabinoids – chemical compounds in the brain that activate the same receptors as THC, an active compound in marijuana – may be helpful in treating depression that results from chronic stress.

In studies on rats, the researchers found that chronic stress reduced the production of endocannabinoids, which affect our cognition, emotion and behavior, and have been linked to reduced feelings of pain and anxiety, increases in appetite and overall feelings of well-being. The body naturally produces these compounds, which are similar to the chemicals in cannabis. Reduction of endocannabinoid production may be one reason that chronic stress is a major risk factor in the development of depression.

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