Marinol (synthetic THC) Decreases Mortality and Viral Load?

December 14, 2010 By Sean Strub

A study recently found that administration of chronic THC (the active ingredient in marijuana; administered in this study via the prescription product Marinol) decreased mortality, helped retain body mass and reduced viral load in plasma and cerebralspinal fluid (CSF).

Researchers at the Louisiana State University Health Services Center, used a "well established nonhuman primate model of HIV disease", and reported surprise at their findings, writing that the results were "contrary to what we expected". Not quite so surprising to me, and perhaps not to others familiar with the anti-inflammatory effects of marijuana.

I have been fascinated with Marinol, the prescription drug that delivers a synthetic form of THC, since it was introduced in the early 1990s. It was approved for HIV-related wasting (and chemo-induced nausea) in part as a response to demands for the legalization of medicinal marijuana. For many people with HIV, myself included, it has been an important part of our ability to regain weight.

But Marinol is expensive and inaccessible to many people with HIV, even though it is preferable to smoking pot, which carries smoking-associated health risks.

Marinol is typically prescribed for daily dosing and the side effects can include a disorienting effect for a few days until one's body gets accustomed to the drug. That disorienting effect is remarkably similar to what others would characterize as "getting high"; but more like the slower and extended effect of a pot brownie rather than the more immediate impact of smoking weed.

If one takes it daily, the high quickly goes away. I've found it curious that the "abuse" of Marinol involves taking too little of it (which retains the psychotropic effect).

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.