



CBD and Autism: Promising Observations, but an Important Reality Check

Cannabinoids have attracted considerable interest among families and researchers studying autism. But controlled clinical research is essential before observations can be interpreted as treatment effects.

A 2025 double-blind crossover trial investigated pharmaceutical CBD in autistic boys experiencing severe behavioral problems.

Clinicians observed behavioral improvement in approximately two-thirds of participants while receiving CBD.

However, the study's primary standardized outcome measures did not demonstrate significant superiority of CBD over placebo. A substantial placebo response was observed.

Potential application

The study provides a compelling example of why clinical impressions and controlled evidence need to be separated.

CBD may still deserve further investigation in specific autism-related symptoms, but larger and carefully designed trials are required before conclusions about clinical effectiveness can be made.

Reference

Trauner D, Umlauf A, Grelotti DJ, et al. Cannabidiol (CBD) treatment for severe problem behaviors in autistic boys: a randomized clinical trial. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*. 2025.

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