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Título: Efficacy Of Cannabinoid Treatment For Autism Spectrum Disorder In Children And Adolescents: A Systematic Review And Meta-Analysis

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Resumo: Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is characterized by difficulties in social communication and interaction, as well as repetitive and restricted patterns of behavior. Currently, there is no established pharmacological treatment for the main symptoms of autism. Cannabinoids seem to have anxiolytic, antipsychotic and neuroprotective properties, and has been associated with improvement in interpersonal communication, but its effects in children with ASD remains unclear. This meta-analysis aims to evaluate the efficacy of Cannabinoid in the treatment of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in children and adolescents. Pubmed, Scopus, and Cochrane databases were systematically searched for randomized controlled trials (RCTs) that evaluated the use of cannabis extract in children and adolescents with ASD. A random-effects model was used to calculate the mean differences (MDs) with 95% confidence intervals (CIs). Heterogeneity was determined using I^2 statistics. Efficacy was assessed using the Childhood Autism Rating Scale (CARS), a diagnostic assessment tool used to evaluate autism severity. R software, version 4.4.0, was used for statistical analysis. A total of three studies were included, comprising 298 patients, of whom 174 (58,39%) received treatment with cannabis extract and 124 were allocated to the control group, which included 916,9-tetrahydrocannabinol and placebo. The mean age ranged from 7.68 to 11.8 years and patients were predominantly male (80.78%). In comparison with the control group, CARS was slightly better in the cannabis group, however, there was no significant statistical difference in efficacy between the groups (MD -1.4967, 95% CI -4.0386 to 1.0452, $p=0.248$, $I^2=13\%$). In this meta-analysis of three RCTs, cannabinoid treatment did not yield statistically significant results, suggesting that cannabinoids are not effective in the treatment of ASD in children and adolescents.