Efficacy of crude marijuana and synthetic delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) as treatment for chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting: a systematic literature review. Oncology Nursing Forum 36(3).

Objectives: To synthesize the research to determine whether oral delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and smoked marijuana are effective treatments for chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting (CINV) and to evaluate side effect preference of these treatments.

Data Sources: Original research, review articles, and other published articles in CINAHL®, MEDLINE®, and Cochrane databases.

Data Synthesis: Cannabinoids are effective in controlling CINV, and oral THC and smoked marijuana have similar efficacy. However, smoked marijuana may not be accessible or safe for all patients with cancer. Also, these drugs have a unique side-effect profile that may include alterations in motor control, dizziness, dysphoria, and decreased concentration.

Conclusions: This synthesis shows that cannabinoids are more effective than placebo and comparable to antiemetics such as prochlorperazine and ondansetron for CINV.

Implications for Nursing: Nurses should feel supported by the literature to recommend oral synthetic THC as a treatment for CINV. Nurses should be cognizant of the side-effect profile for this medication and provide appropriate patient education.