

# THE ENDOCANNABINOID SYSTEM

## THE ORIGINS

Health is about equilibrium, just as life on Earth happens in what has been called “the habitable zone” in reference to a certain equidistance from the sun, so too our well being lies in our “inner comfort zone”, from which we can only drift so far, and we seem to be confined between certain physical limits: too much heat or too much cold and we can’t be, too much acid or too much base and we die, too much food or too little of it and we fall sick. So, it happens that Nature has given us a system to look for this “middle way”, and it has been in place for millions of years by the time humans began interacting with the Cannabis plant.

Thousands of years of different uses of Cannabis Sativa, medicinal and ritualistic as well as for ordinary life, went by before a man named Raphael Mechoulam, decided to investigate what was in the plant, and so it was how in the 1960s the first cannabinoid molecule, the most abundant and psychotropic one, the THC, was discovered, followed soon after by the second most abundant cannabinoid and non psychotropic CBD. As is logical and reasonable, scientific curiosity led to ask how could these exogenous substances produce their various and different effects, and thus is how the first two and main receptors

for these molecules were found, and they were called CB1 and CB2, and that was in the late 1980s – early 1990s. Again, the scientific mindset had to think that these exogenous molecules were mimicking some natural players through occupying their receptors. And thus is how the first two endogenous ligands came to light and were called Anandamide and 2-AG. And this was more than a decade before the cannabis renaissance would start to unfold.

The next step was to categorize these new molecules that, from then on, would be called endocannabinoids, and elucidate how exactly they work. The whole new system, the molecules, their receptors and the enzymatic pathways to bring about or destroy them was also called after the cannabis compounds that helped us discover it, as the Endogenous Cannabinoid system or Endocannabinoid system.

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