

Cannabinol Derivatives: Binding to Cannabinoid Receptors and Inhibition of Adenylylcyclase

Man-Hee Rhee,[†] Zvi Vogel,[†] Jacob Barg,[†] Michael Bayewitch,[†] Rivka Levy,[†] Lumir Hanuš,[‡] Aviva Breuer,[‡] and Raphael Mechoulam^{*,‡}

Department of Neurobiology, The Weizmann Institute of Science, Rehovot 76100, Israel, and Department of Natural Products, Medical Faculty, Hebrew University, Ein Kerem Campus, Jerusalem 91120, Israel

Received March 3, 1997[®]

Several derivatives of cannabinol and the 1,1-dimethylheptyl homolog (DMH) of cannabinol were prepared and assayed for binding to the brain and the peripheral cannabinoid receptors (CB₁ and CB₂), as well as for activation of CB₁- and CB₂-mediated inhibition of adenylylcyclase. The DMH derivatives were much more potent than the pentyl (i.e., cannabinol) derivatives. 11-Hydroxycannabinol (**4a**) was found to bind potently to both CB₁ and CB₂ (K_i values of 38.0 ± 7.2 and 26.6 ± 5.5 nM, respectively) and to inhibit CB₁-mediated adenylylcyclase with an EC_{50} of 58.1 ± 6.2 nM but to cause only 20% inhibition of CB₂-mediated adenylylcyclase at 10 μ M. It behaves as a specific, though not potent, CB₂ antagonist. 11-Hydroxycannabinol-DMH (**4b**) is a very potent agonist for both CB₁ and CB₂ (K_i values of 100 ± 50 and 200 ± 40 pM; EC_{50} of adenylylcyclase inhibition 56.2 ± 4.2 and 207.5 ± 27.8 pM, respectively).

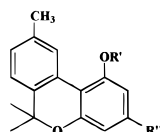
Introduction

Two cannabinoid receptors have been described to date. Both are proteins with seven transmembrane-spanning domains. These receptors were originally found in rat brain and spleen, respectively, and are generally known as the central cannabinoid receptor, CB₁, and the peripheral cannabinoid receptor, CB₂.^{1,2} CB₁ is mainly expressed in the central nervous system (CNS). It is also found, to a lesser extent, outside the CNS, in numerous other tissues such as vas deferens, adrenal gland, heart, lung, prostate, uterus, ovary, testis, bone marrow, thymus, and tonsils.^{3,4} The CB₂ gene is not expressed in the brain, being found mostly in the immune system. In certain tissues, such as spleen, the mRNA content of CB₂ is particularly high. In blood cell subpopulations, it is found particularly in B-cells.^{3,4} It has been suggested that "cannabinoids may exert specific receptor-mediated action on the immune system through the CB₂ receptor".⁴

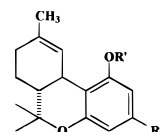
While a considerable amount of work has been done on structure–activity relationships (SAR) as regards binding to CB₁,^{5–7} very little is known on binding to CB₂.⁸ In the original paper on the identification of CB₂, Munro et al.⁹ showed that cannabinol (CBN) (**1a**), which only binds feebly to CB₁, much less so than Δ^9 -tetrahydrocannabinol (Δ^9 -THC) (**2a**), binds to CB₂ at the same level of potency as Δ^9 -THC. The low binding to CB₁ is compatible with the low THC-type *in vivo* activity recorded for CBN when compared to Δ^9 -THC.¹⁰ The binding of CBN to CB₂, with a potency equivalent to that of Δ^9 -THC, suggests that cannabinol derivatives could serve as a novel starting point for SAR analysis in the cannabinoid series and could possibly lead to selectivity as regards binding to the two cannabinoid receptors.

We present here data on several cannabinol derivatives which have been tested for binding to CB₁ and CB₂.

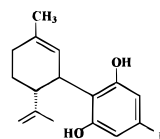
Chart 1



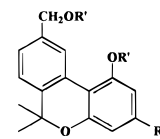
1a, Cannabinol (CBN)
R' = H, R'' = C₅H₁₁
1b, R' = H, R'' = C(CH₃)₂C₆H₁₃
1c, R' = COCH₃, R'' = C(CH₃)₂C₆H₁₃



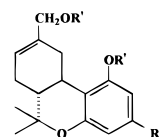
2a, Δ^9 -THC, R' = H, R'' = C₅H₁₁
2b, R' = COCH₃, R'' = C₅H₁₁
2c, R' = H, R'' = C(CH₃)₂C₆H₁₃
2d, R' = COCH₃, R'' = C(CH₃)₂C₆H₁₃



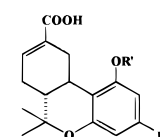
3a, Cannabidiol, R = C₅H₁₁
3b, R = C(CH₃)₂C₆H₁₃



4a, R' = H, R'' = C₅H₁₁
4b, R' = H, R'' = C(CH₃)₂C₆H₁₃
4c, R' = COCH₃, R'' = C(CH₃)₂C₆H₁₃



5a, R' = H, R'' = C(CH₃)₂C₆H₁₃
5b, R' = COCH₃, R'' = C(CH₃)₂C₆H₁₃
5c, R' = H, R'' = C₅H₁₁



6a, R' = H, R'' = C(CH₃)₂C₆H₁₃
6b, R' = COCH₃, R'' = C(CH₃)₂C₆H₁₃
6c, R' = H, R'' = C₅H₁₁
6d, R' = COCH₃, R'' = C₅H₁₁

Both CB₁ and CB₂ binding assays were performed with transfected cells.^{11–13} For comparison purposes, the derivatives were also assayed for CB₁ binding to membranes, as previously described.¹⁴

Various laboratories, including our own, have established that the signal transduction pathway utilized by the two cannabinoid receptors proceeds through pertussis toxin-sensitive G proteins and inhibition of adenylylcyclase activity.² We recently showed that Δ^9 -THC binds to both receptors with similar affinity; however, in contrast to its capacity to serve as an agonist for the CB₁ receptor and to inhibit CB₁-mediated adenylylcyclase, Δ^9 -THC was only able to induce a very slight inhibition of adenylylcyclase at the CB₂ receptor.¹²

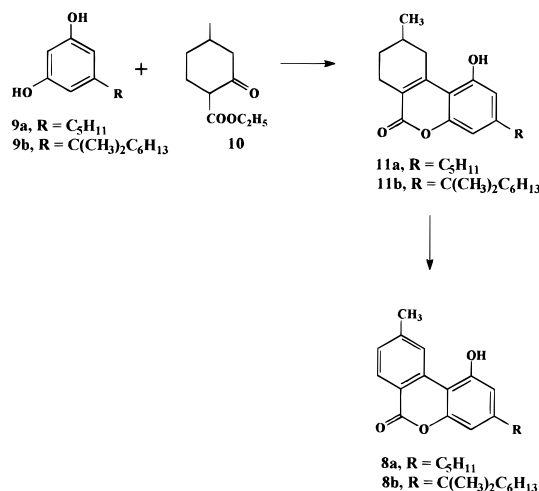
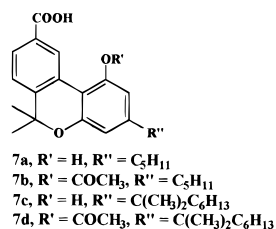
* Address correspondence to this author. Fax: 972-2-6410740. E-mail: mechoulam@yam-suff.cc.huji.ac.il.

[†] The Weizmann Institute of Science.

[‡] Hebrew University.

[®] Abstract published in *Advance ACS Abstracts*, August 15, 1997.

Scheme 1



Moreover Δ^9 -THC antagonizes the agonist-induced inhibition of adenylyl cyclase mediated by CB₂. Therefore, we concluded that Δ^9 -THC constitutes a weak antagonist for the CB₂ receptor.¹² It was thus of interest to find out whether CBN derivatives could selectively activate one of the cannabinoid receptors. Therefore, all compounds were tested for CB₁- as well as CB₂-mediated inhibition of adenylyl cyclase. The present paper is apparently the first one which examines the SAR of cannabinol derivatives for binding to the cannabinoid receptors as well as for inhibition of adenylyl cyclase.

Chemistry

Cannabinol (**1a**), Δ^9 -THC (**2a**), and cannabidiol (**3a**) were extracted from hashish.^{15,16} The 1,1-dimethylheptyl (DMH) homolog (**2c**) (at position 3) of Δ^9 -THC was prepared by Lewis acid-catalyzed ring cyclization of the DMH homolog of cannabidiol (**3b**),¹⁷ as previously described for the parallel conversion of cannabidiol (**3a**) into Δ^9 -THC (**2a**).¹⁶ The DMH homolog of cannabinol (**1b**) was prepared by dehydrogenation with sulfur at 240 °C of **2d** (synthesized by acetylation of **2c**), leading to **1c**, followed by removal of the acetate group with ethanolic sodium hydroxide. The isomeric 1,2-dimethylheptyl homolog of CBN has previously been prepared and shown to be a potent cannabimimetic.¹⁸ 11-Hydroxycannabinol (**4a**) was prepared, as previously described, by selenium dioxide oxidation and dehydrogenation of Δ^9 -THC acetate (**2b**) followed by removal of the ester grouping.¹⁹ 11-Hydroxy- Δ^8 -THC (**5c**) and its DMH homolog (**5a**) were prepared as previously described.^{19,20} Dehydrogenation of the DMH homolog of 11-hydroxy- Δ^8 -THC diacetate (**5b**)²⁰ with sulfur at 240 °C led to the DMH homolog of 11-hydroxycannabinol diacetate (**4c**), which was converted to the diol **4b**.

The same procedure was followed for the conversion of Δ^8 -THC-7-oic acid (**6c**)²¹ into cannabinol-7-oic acid

(**7a**)²² and of the DMH homolog of (–)- Δ^8 -THC-11-oic acid (**6a**)²³ into the DMH homolog of cannabinol-11-oic acid (**7c**). The lactones **8a,b** were prepared following a route reported by the groups of Adams and Todd about 50 years ago.²⁴ Von Pechmann condensation of either olivetol (**9a**) or 3-(1,1-dimethylheptyl)resorcinol (**9b**) with ethyl 5-methyl-1-oxocyclohexane-2-carboxylate (**10**) led to the known tetrahydrodibenzopyrone **11a** or **11b**, respectively.²⁴ Dehydrogenation of **11a** or **11b** as described above gave **8a**²⁴ or **8b**, respectively.

Biological Results

All compounds were tested for binding to CB₁ using African green monkey kidney (COS-7) cells transfected with the cDNA of rat CB₁^{12,25} as well as rat brain synaptosomal membrane preparations.^{14,26} Binding to CB₂ was performed using transfected COS-7 and Chinese hamster ovary (CHO) cells transfected with the cDNA of human CB₂.^{9,11,12} The *K_i* values were determined by displacement of [³H]HU-243, a probe for both cannabinoid receptors.^{26,27} For consistency, the results discussed below are those from transfected cells except when specifically indicated. All compounds were also assayed for inhibition of CB₁- and CB₂-mediated adenylyl cyclase.^{11,12} The results are summarized in Table 1.

First, CBN (**1a**) was compared to Δ^9 -THC (**2a**). Under our experimental conditions, CBN was about 2–4 times less potent on binding to either CB₁ or CB₂, in contrast to the data reported by Munro et al.,⁹ who found that CBN and Δ^9 -THC are equipotent on CB₂. These differences in recorded potencies are not unexpected, as binding data are very sensitive to experimental conditions. The CB₁-mediated adenylyl cyclase inhibition data seem to be closer to *in vivo* observations, where, as mentioned above, Δ^9 -THC is considerably more potent than CBN. We found that CBN is about 13 times less potent than Δ^9 -THC. With CB₂ we see a different profile. While the EC₅₀ of CBN inhibition of CB₂-mediated cyclase is 261.2 ± 46.4 nM, Δ^9 -THC causes only 21% inhibition at 1 μM. We have previously shown that Δ^9 -THC is a weak agonist for CB₂ and can actually antagonize the CB₂-mediated inhibition of adenylyl cyclase caused by more potent agonists.¹²

The next derivative to be examined was the DMH homolog of CBN (**1b**). We observed essentially no difference between its binding affinity to CB₁ or CB₂. On both receptors, **1b** was about 100 times more potent than CBN. It was also 100 times more potent than CBN when tested for binding to rat brain membranes. This compound also potently inhibited adenylyl cyclase *via* both CB₁ and CB₂: the *K_i* of inhibition by **1b** of CB₁-mediated cyclase was ca. 660-fold lower, and the CB₂-mediated cyclase *K_i* was ca. 300-fold lower than that of CBN. This result demonstrates that the exchange of the pentyl group with the DMH group (at position 3) dramatically increases the affinity of the ligand to both CB₁ and CB₂ and makes it a much more potent agonist. A similar result was obtained with other cannabinol derivatives (see below). Neither CBN (**1a**) nor its DMH homolog **1b** express any particular selectivity with regard to the inhibition of adenylyl cyclase *via* the two receptors. However, a major metabolite of CBN, namely, 11-hydroxy-CBN (**4a**),^{19,22,28} had a different profile. It binds to both receptors with *K_i* values ca. 5-fold lower than the *K_i* values recorded for CBN. However, while

Table 1. Binding of Various Cannabinoids to Cannabinoid Receptors and Inhibition of Adenylylcyclase^{a,b}

compound	brain synaptosomal binding, CB ₁ (K _i , nM)	COS CB ₁ and CB ₂			
		binding (K _i , nM)		adenylylcyclase (EC ₅₀ , nM)	
		CB ₁	CB ₂	CB ₁	CB ₂
CBN (1a)	392.2 ± 53.5	211.2 ± 35.0	126.4 ± 26.0	120.0 ± 32.1	261.2 ± 46.4
CBN-DMH (1b)	3.3 ± 0.2	2.0 ± 0.3	1.5 ± 0.5	0.18 ± 0.03	0.79 ± 0.021
Δ ⁹ -THC (2a)	66.5 ± 5.8	80.3 ± 22.2	32.2 ± 6.7	11.0 ± 2.1	21% inhib at 1 μM
Δ ⁹ -THC-DMH (2c)	2.6 ± 0.3	0.241 ± 0.05	0.199 ± 0.05	0.58 ± 0.12	1.01 ± 0.15
11-OH-CBN (4a)	188.9 ± 38.3	38.0 ± 7.2	26.6 ± 5.5	58.1 ± 6.2	20% inhib at 10 μM
11-OH-CBN-DMH (4b)	1.8 ± 0.3	0.1 ± 0.05	0.2 ± 0.04	0.056 ± 0.004	0.208 ± 0.028
11-OH-Δ ⁸ -THC (5c)	33.4 ± 3.8	25.8 ± 2.9	7.4 ± 2.5	39.9 ± 8.9	19% inhib at 1 μM
11-OH-Δ ⁸ -THC-DMH (5a)	0.19 ± 0.01	0.1 ± 0.02	0.17 ± 0.01	0.035 ± 0.005	0.078 ± 0.009
Δ ⁸ -THC-11-oic acid-DMH (6a)	480.6 ± 40.8	32.3 ± 3.7	170.5 ± 7.8	927.0 ± 39.6	116.2 ± 74.7
Δ ⁸ -THC-11-oic acid-DMH acetate (6b)	>10000	11% inhib at 1 μM	9% inhib at 1 μM	no inhib at 1 μM	27% inhib at 1 μM
CBN-11-oic acid (7a)	602.4 ± 15.8	<2% inhib at 1 μM	23% inhib at 1 μM	10% inhib at 1 μM	6% inhib at 1 μM
CBN-11-oic acid acetate (7b)	>10000	35% inhib at 1 μM	19% inhib at 1 μM	3% inhib at 1 μM	2% inhib at 1 μM
CBN-DMH-11-oic acid (7c)	6.1 ± 0.7	6.1 ± 1.1	4.8 ± 1.9	2.4 ± 0.2	5.4 ± 0.3
CBN-DMH-11-oic acid acetate (7d)	556.1 ± 40.6	49.8 ± 11.5	17.3 ± 7.4	13.3 ± 3.4	39.3 ± 6.1
lactone 8a	>10000	14% inhib at 1 μM	14% inhib at 1 μM	7% inhib at 1 μM	no inhib at 1 μM
lactone 8b	72.5 ± 3.6	32.7 ± 4.9	17.3 ± 5.6	9.6 ± 0.6	4.6 ± 0.3

^a For details of procedures, see Experimental Section. ^b For structures, see text.

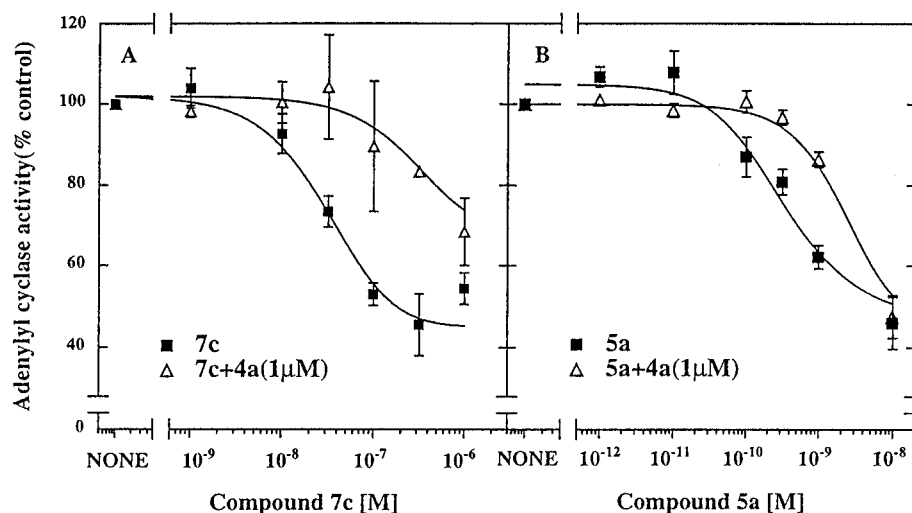


Figure 1. Compound **4a** antagonizes the capacity of the cannabinoid agonists **7c** (A) and **5a** (B) to inhibit the forskolin-stimulated adenylylcyclase activity in CHO cells stably transfected with cDNA of human CB₂. Compounds **4a**, **7c**, and **5a** were added at the indicated concentrations; 100% represents the amount of cAMP in the absence of cannabinoids. Each point is the mean ± standard deviation of three experiments performed in triplicate.

the EC₅₀ for the CB₁-mediated inhibition of cyclase was 58.1 ± 6.2 nM, the inhibition of the CB₂-mediated cyclase was negligible: 20% inhibition at 10 μM. This result indicates that **4a** could serve as a functional antagonist of CB₂ as it binds, but does not activate, CB₂. Indeed, it reduces the CB₂-mediated adenylylcyclase inhibitory activity of the potent agonists **5a** (HU-210)^{5,8b,20} and **7c** (Figure 1). However while the adenylylcyclase inhibition by **7c** is very strongly reduced by **4a**, that of **5a** is considerably less. This difference may well be due to the higher inhibitory potency of **5a**, compared to **7c**. It should be pointed out that **4a**, a major metabolite of CBN, in its differential activity between CB₁ and CB₂, resembles Δ⁹-THC rather than CBN (see above):¹² both Δ⁹-THC and **4a** bind to CB₁ and CB₂ and inhibit CB₁-mediated cyclase in the nanomolar range but cause only negligible inhibition of CB₂-mediated cyclase up to micromolar concentrations.

The DMH homolog of 11-hydroxycannabinol (**4b**) is the most potent cannabinoid in the present series. It binds to CB₁ and CB₂ with K_i values of 100 ± 50 and 200 ± 40 pM, respectively. Compound **4b** also inhibits adenylylcyclase *via* both CB₁ and CB₂, at very low

concentrations: 56.2 ± 4.2 and 207.5 ± 27.8 pM, respectively. Both the binding constants and EC₅₀ values for CB₁ and CB₂ are comparable to the values observed for HU-210 (**5a**).

Cannabinol-11-oic acid (**7a**),²² as well as its acetate (**7b**), were essentially inactive on binding to either CB₁ or CB₂, as well as in CB₁- or CB₂-mediated cyclase inhibition. However, the DMH homologs, compounds **7c,d**, bind to both CB₁ and CB₂ and inhibit adenylylcyclase *via* the two receptors with high potency. The nonacetylated derivative **7c** binds with K_i values of 6.1 ± 1.1 and 4.8 ± 1.9 nM to CB₁ and CB₂, respectively, and inhibits cyclase CB₁- and CB₂-mediated activity with EC₅₀ values of 2.4 ± 0.2 and 5.4 ± 0.3 nM, respectively. These results were unexpected as THC-type 11-oic cannabinoid acids (including DMH homologs) such as **6a,c** have not been reported to cause psychotropic effects,^{10,21,23} which are presumably mediated by CB₁. The acetate **7d** is also active in all these assays, although its activity is 4–7 times lower than the nonacetylated acid (see Table 1). This difference was even larger (90 times) when the acetate **7d** was compared to the nonacetylated acid **7c** with regards to

binding to CB₁ on synaptosomal membranes. It is not clear whether the weaker activity of the acetate is due to its own lower intrinsic activity or to a certain amount of nonacetylated **7c** formed by hydrolysis during the assays.

In view of these results (see Discussion), we looked again into the activity of the DMH homolog of Δ^8 -THC-7-oic acid (**6a**).²³ This compound, synthesized in our laboratory several years ago, was found then to reduce paw edema and leukocyte adhesion to culture dishes and was considered to be antiinflammatory. It did not cause catalepsy in mice at doses up to 1 mg/kg.²³ We now find that **6a** binds to CB₁ with a rather low K_i of 32.3 ± 3.7 nM but is only a relatively weak inhibitor of CB₁-mediated cyclase ($EC_{50} = 927.0 \pm 39.6$ nM). It binds to the CB₂ receptor with a K_i of 170.5 ± 7.8 nM and inhibits CB₂-mediated cyclase ($EC_{50} = 116.2 \pm 74.7$ nM). This material thus affects signaling *via* CB₂ more effectively than *via* CB₁.

The last series to be examined were cannabinol derivatives in which the pyran ring was modified; instead of the two methyl groups on ring B, a ketone was introduced, thus forming a lactone. Compound **8a** (with a pentyl side chain)²⁴ did not bind to either CB₁ or CB₂ and did not inhibit adenylylcyclase, while the DMH derivative **8b** was highly potent, binding to both CB₁ and CB₂ with K_i values of 32.7 ± 4.9 and 17.3 ± 5.6 nM, respectively. It inhibited both CB₁- and CB₂-mediated adenylylcyclase with EC_{50} values of 9.6 ± 0.6 and 4.6 ± 0.3 nM, respectively.

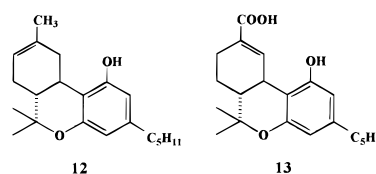
Discussion

For reasons discussed in the Introduction, we assumed that CBN derivatives may show differential binding for CB₁ compared to CB₂. The results obtained did not fulfill these expectations. Compounds binding poorly to CB₁ (such as **7a**, **8a**) had the same profile with CB₂, and this was the case also for the more potent compounds (such as **1b**, **4a,b**, **7c,d**, **8b**). However, our results proved to be of interest in another direction: we found that binding to CB₂ (see compound **4a**) does not necessarily imply a parallel level of inhibition of CB₂-mediated adenylylcyclase. As mentioned above, the major CBN metabolite, 11-hydroxy-CBN (**4a**), binds well to both CB₁ and CB₂ ($K_i = 38 \pm 7.2$ and 26.6 ± 5.5 nM, respectively). However, while **4a** inhibits adenylylcyclase strongly *via* CB₁ ($EC_{50} = 58.1 \pm 6.2$ nM), its inhibition of adenylylcyclase *via* CB₂ is negligible (Table 1). Further experiments (see Biological Results and Figure 1) indeed showed that **4a** is a weak antagonist to CB₂. Hence, this CBN metabolite may represent a useful target for future research and possibly a tool in CB₂ investigations. As **4a** is formed *in vivo* from CBN, its presence in the body may have physiological consequences associated with CB₂-promoted activities, possibly in the immune system.

The replacement of the pentyl group at position 3 with the DMH group increased affinity to CB₁ as well as to CB₂ in all compounds tested. The dramatic increase of pharmacological activity associated with such a structural change was first noted about 50 years ago.^{24c,d} As indicated above, the DMH homolog of 11-hydroxy-CBN (**4b**) is the most active compound in the present series as regards binding to CB₁ and CB₂, as well as inhibition of adenylylcyclase (see Table 1). It may serve alongside HU-210 (**5a**) as a potent tool in cannabinoid research.

Indeed, **4b** shows binding values and cyclase inhibition levels very similar to those of HU-210 (**5a**) (see Table 1).

Oxidation of the 11-CH₃ group in Δ^9 -THC (**2a**) or Δ^8 -THC (**12**) to a carboxyl group forming THC-7-oic acids (**13** or **6c**, respectively) leads to inactivation, as seen in behavioral assays.^{10,21} Indeed, this route is the major



inactivation pathway of THC metabolism. The DMH homolog of Δ^8 -THC, 11-oic acid **6a**, has also been reported to lack THC-type activity,²³ although the reported test range was limited. Unexpectedly, we now find that although **6a** binds to both CB₁ and CB₂ in the 30–170 nM range, the EC_{50} of adenylylcyclase inhibition *via* CB₁ is in the range of 927 ± 39.6 nM. The CB₂-mediated adenylylcyclase is in the intermediate range (116.2 ± 74.7 nM), i.e., a certain separation between CB₁- and CB₂-mediated activation is noted. In the CBN-11-oic acid series, we observed a different profile: while in the pentyl series (**7a,b**), as expected, we recorded no binding or inhibition of cyclase, with DMH-CBN-11-oic acid (**7c**), we found potent binding to both CB₁ and CB₂ and cyclase inhibition (see Table 1). Compounds **6a** and **7c** differ in the conformation of ring A: a planar aromatic ring in **7c** versus a half-chair one in **6a**. This conformational difference may represent the molecular basis for the different activities of the two cannabinoids.

A comparison of the binding values of **6a** with those of its CB₁- and CB₂-mediated cyclase inhibition (see Table 1) may explain some of the previously reported properties of **6a**. The relatively high levels of **6a** needed to inhibit adenylylcyclase *via* CB₁ may explain the absence of catalepsy (within the limited dose range tested), in spite of its considerable binding potency, while the ca. 10 times lower levels needed to inhibit adenylylcyclase *via* CB₂ may be the basis of its reported antiinflammatory activity. These observations may serve to open new leads toward the development of antiinflammatory agents in which wider separations of activity can be achieved than these reported now.

As mentioned above, all compounds presented in Table 1 were tested for binding both in transfected cells and in rat brain synaptosomal preparations. While the general potency trend is comparable in the two assays, some individual differences are striking. Compounds **6b**, **7b**, and **8a** are inactive in both assays; **7a** is inactive in transfected cells and poorly active in the membrane assay. The highly potent **1b**, **5a**, and **7c** have the same profile in both assays. However 11-hydroxy CBN-DMH (**4b**) has a K_i of 100.0 ± 50.0 pM in transfected cells and nearly 20 times higher K_i (i.e., lower potency) in brain membranes. In the compounds within the intermediate range, the K_i values differ widely: from about 2 times (i.e., essentially equipotent) in **1a**, **2a**, and **8b** to about 10 times or more in **7d** and **6a**. The reasons for these differences are not clear, but they should be taken into account when binding data in the cannabinoid series are compared.

In summary, a comparison of the binding potency of several cannabinol derivatives to CB₁ and CB₂ with

their capacity to inhibit adenylylcyclase has led to the discovery of a CBN metabolite (11-hydroxy-CBN, **4a**) as a specific, though not potent, CB₂ antagonist and to a new very potent agonist for both CB₁ and CB₂ (11-hydroxy-CBN-DMH, **4b**).

Experimental Section

Chemistry. ¹H NMR spectra were measured on a Varian VXR-300S spectrophotometer using TMS as the internal standard. All chemical shifts are reported in ppm. Specific rotations were detected with a Perkin-Elmer 141 polarimeter. Melting points (uncorrected) were determined on a Buchi 530 apparatus. Column chromatography was performed with ICN silica gel 60A. Organic solutions were dried over anhydrous magnesium sulfate. Elemental analyses were obtained for all new compounds (or their acetates) and were $\pm 0.4\%$ of the theoretical values. The analyses were performed at the Elemental Analysis Laboratory of the Hebrew University.

Δ^9 -Tetrahydrocannabinol-DMH (2c**).** Boron trifluoride etherate (5.5 mL) was added to cannabidiol-DMH (**3b**)¹⁷ (5.7 g, 15.4 mmol) in dry dichloromethane (150 mL) containing magnesium sulfate (1 g), under a nitrogen atmosphere. The reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 20 min. A saturated solution of sodium bicarbonate was added until the red color observed during the reaction faded. The reaction mixture was washed with water, separated, dried, and evaporated. The oil obtained was chromatographed on a silica gel column. Δ^9 -Tetrahydrocannabinol-DMH (**2c**) (3 g, 53%) was eluted with 4% ether in petroleum ether: ¹H NMR (CDCl₃) δ 6.38, 6.26 (s, 2H), 6.3 (s, 1H), 3.16 (d, 1H, $J = 11.1$ Hz), 2.14 (2H), 0.8–1.8 (m); IR (neat) 3300, 2950, 2850, 1620, 1570 cm⁻¹. Anal. (C₂₅H₃₈O₂) C, H.

Δ^9 -THC-DMH (**2c**) is not stable. At room temperature it rapidly becomes violet; on TLC after 0.5 h, numerous new spots are observed.

Δ^9 -Tetrahydrocannabinol-DMH acetate (2d**):** ¹H NMR (CDCl₃) δ 6.67, 6.50 (s, 2H), 6.0 (s, 1H), 3.2 (d, 1H), 2.28 (s, 3H), 2.14 (2H), 1.9–0.8 (m); IR (neat) 2900, 1760, 1620, 1560 cm⁻¹.

Dehydrogenations of **2d, **5b**, **6b**, **d**, and **11b**.** The dehydrogenations were carried out by heating each compound with sulfur at 238–240 °C, under a nitrogen atmosphere, for ca. 4 h. Each mixture was extracted with ether and evaporated. The residue was chromatographed on a silica gel column using variable concentrations of ether in petroleum ether as eluent. Compound **2d** led to cannabinol-DMH acetate (**1c**); compound **5b** gave **4c**; compound **6b** gave **7d**; compound **11b** gave **8b**. For yields and spectroscopic data, see below.

Cannabinol-DMH acetate (1c**):** obtained in 24% yield, mp 84–86 °C; ¹H NMR (CDCl₃) δ 7.8, 7.25, 7.13 (s, 3H), 6.85 (d, 1H, $J = 2.1$ Hz), 6.67 (d, 1H, $J = 2.1$ Hz), 2.36 (s, 3H), 2.32 (s, 3H), 1.6–0.8 (m); IR (neat) 2930, 1780, 1620, 1560 cm⁻¹. Anal. (C₂₇H₃₆O₃) C, H.

11-Hydroxycannabinol-DMH acetate (4c**):** obtained in 44% yield from **5b**; ¹H NMR (CDCl₃) δ 8.00, 7.25 (s, 3H) 6.85 (d, 1H, $J = 1.5$ Hz), 6.68 (d, 1H, $J = 1.5$ Hz), 5.10 (s, 2H), 2.34 (s, 3H), 2.10 (s, 3H), 1.6–0.85 (m); IR (neat) 2930, 1780, 1740, 1620, 1540 cm⁻¹.

Cannabinol-11-oic acid acetate (7b**):** obtained in 22% yield from **6d**, mp 149–151 °C; ¹H NMR (CDCl₃) δ 8.81 (s, 1H), 8.02 (d, 1H, $J = 8.1$ Hz), 7.38 (d, 1H, $J = 8.4$ Hz), 6.78, 6.64 (s, 2H), 2.42 (s, 3H), 1.7–0.8 (m); IR (neat) 2960, 1760, 1670, 1610, 1570 cm⁻¹. Anal. (C₂₃H₂₆O₅) C, H.

Cannabinol-11-oic acid-DMH acetate (7d**):** obtained in 20% yield from **6b**; ¹H NMR (CDCl₃) δ 8.8 (s, 1H), 8.02 (d, 1H, $J = 8.1$ Hz), 7.38 (d, 1H, $J = 8.4$ Hz), 6.86, 6.75 (s, 2H), 2.42 (s, 3H), 1.7–0.8 (m); IR (neat) 2960, 1780, 1680, 1620, 1570 cm⁻¹. Anal. (C₂₇H₃₄O₅) C, H.

Cannabinol-DMH (1b**):** Hydrolysis of **1c** in ethanolic sodium hydroxide solution gave compound **1b**, mp 95–98 °C; ¹H NMR (CDCl₃) δ 8.11, 7.22, 7.08, 6.36, 6.4 (s, 5H), 2.33 (s, 3H), 1.5–0.7 (m).

11-Hydroxycannabinol-DMH (4b**):** Compound **4c** (526 mg, 1.13 mmol) in dry ether (10 mL) was added to lithium aluminum hydride (123 mg) in dry ether (8 mL). The mixture was boiled under reflux for 2 h. The oil obtained after workup

was chromatographed on a silica gel column (60 g). Elution with 20% ether in petroleum ether gave, after crystallization from pentane, compound **4b** (340 mg, 78%): mp 128–130 °C; ¹H NMR (CDCl₃) δ 8.45, 7.255, 7.253, 6.60, 6.40 (s, 5H), 4.75 (s, 2H), 1.65–0.8 (m, 2H). Anal. (C₂₅H₃₄O₃) C, H.

Cannabinol-11-oic acid-DMH (7c**).** Compound **7d** (60 mg) was dissolved in 0.6 mL of ethanol. A solution of 60 mg of sodium hydroxide in 0.4 mL of water was added under nitrogen. The solution was stirred at room temperature for 30 min. The solution was acidified with 10% HCl (5 mL); the mixture was extracted with ether, dried with MgSO₄, and evaporated. The material obtained was separated on a preparative TLC plate (elution with ether:petroleum ether, 7:3), leading to 41 mg of **7c**, 76% yield: ¹H NMR 9.2 (s, 1H), 8.0 (d, 1H), 7.38 (d, 1H), 6.61 (s, 1H), 6.45 (s, 1H), 1.7–0.8 (m).

Cannabinol-11-oic acid (7a**):** **7b** was hydrolyzed in ethanolic sodium hydroxide solution as described for compound **7c** to yield **7a**, 82% yield; ¹H NMR δ 9.2 (s, 1H), 8.0 (d, 1H), 7.38 (d, 1H), 6.62 (s, 1H), 6.47 (s, 1H), 1.8–0.8 (m).

Compound **11b.** A solution of 3-DMH-resorcinol (**9b**) (3.9 g, 16.5 mmol), ethyl 4-methyl-2-oxocyclohexanecarboxylate (**10**) (4 g, 21.7 mmol), and POCl₃ (3.06 mL) in dry benzene (15 mL) was boiled under reflux, under a nitrogen atmosphere, for 3 h. The solution was washed with NaHCO₃ followed by water. After drying and evaporation the oil was chromatographed on a silica gel column. Compound **11b**^{24c} (40%) was eluted with 10% ether in petroleum ether: mp 158–160 °C (from pentane); ¹H NMR (CDCl₃) δ 6.83, 6.63 (s, 2H), 3.4 (dd, 2H), 2.8 (dd, 2H), 2.7–0.8 (m); IR (Nujol) 1680, 1610sh, 1580 cm⁻¹; MS M⁺ 356.

Compound **8b:** dehydrogenation of **11b** with sulfur as described above gave compound **8b** (72%), mp 184–185 °C (from pentane); ¹H NMR (CDCl₃) δ 8.82 (s, 1H), 8.3 (d, 1H), 7.38 (d, 1H), 6.94, 6.72 (s, 2H), 2.54 (s, 3H), 1.6–0.8 (m, 19H). Anal. (C₂₃H₂₈O₃) C, H.

Receptor Binding Assay. a. Binding to Synaptosomal Membranes. Synaptosomal brain preparations were made from whole rat brain as described previously.^{26,27} Binding of [³H]HU-243 (50.4 Ci/mmol) was assayed in triplicate as described.^{26,27} In brief, each reaction mixture of 1 mL in siliconized Eppendorf tubes contained 2.4–3.8 μ g of synaptosomal membrane protein, 28–48 fmol of [³H]HU-243, and various concentrations of competing unlabeled cannabinoids. Tubes were incubated at 30 °C for 90 min and centrifuged at 13 000 rpm, and the tips of the tubes containing the pelleted membranes were cut and counted for their radioactivity.

b. Binding to Transfected COS-7 Cells. Two days after transfection (with 5 μ g/100 mm of dish plasmids encoding CB₁ or CB₂) the cells were washed with phosphate-buffered saline, scraped, pelleted, and stored at –80 °C. Cell pellets were homogenized in binding buffer (50 mM Tris-HCl, 5 mM MgCl₂, and 2.5 mM EDTA, pH 7.4), and 50 μ g protein aliquots were assayed for binding of [³H]HU-243 as described above, except that the final concentration of [³H]HU-243 was 300 pM. For more detailed information see refs 11 and 12.

Specific binding was defined as the difference between the amount of radioactivity bound to the pelleted membranes in the absence and presence of 50 nM unlabeled HU-243 (for a) or 1 μ M unlabeled **5a** (HU-210) (for b) and was typically 70–80% of the total bound. The K_i values for the various cannabinoids and related compounds were calculated from the competition data according to the formula: K_i = IC₅₀/1 + ([³H]-HU-243/K_d).²⁹ The K_d values for HU-243 binding were 45²⁶ and 61 pM¹¹ for CB₁ and CB₂, respectively.

Cell Cultures. Cells were cultured in Dulbecco's modified Eagle's medium supplemented with 8% fetal calf serum, 2 mM glutamine, nonessential amino acids, 100 units/mL penicillin, and 100 μ g/mL streptomycin in a humidified atmosphere consisting of 5% CO₂ and 95% air at 37 °C. CHO cells stably transfected with the cDNA of human CB₂ receptor⁹ were described earlier.¹¹ COS-7 cells in 100 mm dishes were transiently transfected¹² with plasmids encoding rat CB₁²⁵ or human CB₂⁹ (5 μ g each) and, when indicated, with 2 μ g of the plasmid containing the cDNA of adenylylcyclase type V.¹² Twenty-four hours later, the cells were trypsinized and cultured in 24-well plates. After an additional 24 h, the cells

were assayed for adenylylcyclase activity. Transfection efficiency, determined by transfection with the cDNA for β -galactosidase, was 40–80%.

Adenylylcyclase Assay. The assay were performed as described.^{11,12,27} Cells cultured in 24-well plates were incubated for 3 h with 0.25 mL/well fresh growth medium containing 5 μ Ci/mL [3 H]adenine. This medium was replaced with Dulbecco's modified Eagle's medium containing 20 mM Hepes (pH 7.4), 1 mg/mL fatty acid-free bovine serum albumin, 0.5 mM 1-methyl-3-isobutylxanthine, and 0.5 mM RO-20-1724. Cannabinoids and forskolin (1 μ M) were added, and the cells were incubated at 37 °C for 10 min. The reaction was terminated with 1 mL of 2.5% perchloric acid containing 0.1 mM unlabeled cAMP. Aliquots of 0.9 mL were neutralized with 100 μ L of 3.8 M KOH and 0.16 M K_2CO_3 and applied to a two-step column separation procedure.^{12,27} The [3 H]cAMP was eluted into scintillation vials and counted. Background levels (cAMP accumulation in the absence of forskolin) were subtracted from all values and represented less than 10% of forskolin-stimulated cAMP accumulation.

Statistical Analysis. Data were analyzed using the Student's *t*-test. Inhibition curves were generated with the Sigma Plot 4.11 program, and the EC_{50} values were determined using an equation from the ALLFIT program.³⁰

Acknowledgment. This work was supported by NIDA grants DA 9789 and DA 8169 (to R.M.) and a grant by the Israel Science Foundation (to Z.V. and R.M.), the Forchheimer Center for Molecular Genetics (to Z.V.), and the Henry and Anne Reich Research Fund for Mental Health (to Z.V.). M.B. was supported by a fellowship from the Israeli Ministry of Science and Technology. Z.V. is the incumbent of the Ruth and Leonard Shimon Chair of Cancer Research. R.M. is the Lionel Jacobson Professor Medicinal Chemistry. The authors thank Drs. T. Bonner (NIMH, NIH, Bethesda, MD), S. Munro (Cambridge, U.K.), and T. Pfeuffer (Dusseldorf, Germany) for their kind donations of plasmids encoding CB₁, CB₂, and adenylylcyclase type V, respectively.

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JM970126F