

Application of Causal Inference to Identify Determinants of Seizure Reduction and Quality of Life in Patients with Lennox-Gastaut Syndrome, Dravet Syndrome, and Tuberous Sclerosis Complex Treated with Cannabidiol

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Disclosures

Author disclosures:

- All authors met the ICMJE authorship criteria and had full access to relevant data. Neither honoraria nor payments were made for authorship
- TG and MB are employees of Jazz Pharmaceuticals, Inc., Italy and Jazz Pharmaceuticals, Inc., USA, respectively, and hold stock and/or stock options in Jazz Pharmaceuticals, Inc.
- NS and SA have consulted for, conducted studies funded by, or received honoraria for services provided to Jazz Pharmaceuticals, Inc.

Product disclosures:

- Epidyolex® (cannabidiol) is approved in the UK and EU for the adjunctive treatment of seizures associated with Lennox-Gastaut syndrome or Dravet syndrome, in conjunction with clobazam, in patients ≥2 years of age; it is additionally approved in the UK and EU for the adjunctive treatment of seizures associated with tuberous sclerosis complex in patients ≥2 years of age^{1,2}
- Availability across Europe may vary; please refer to product information¹
- Epidiolex® (cannabidiol) is approved in the US for the treatment of seizures associated with Lennox-Gastaut syndrome, Dravet syndrome, or tuberous sclerosis complex in patients ≥1 year of age³
- The product is also approved in some additional countries; please check local prescribing information
- This chart review was specific to patients receiving Epidyolex®, and results do not apply to other CBD-containing products

Acknowledgements:

- Medical writing and editorial support were provided by Lahoor Basha, PharmD, of Syneos Health, UK, funded by Jazz Pharmaceuticals, Inc.

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CBD, cannabidiol.

1. Electronic Medicines Compendium (eMC). Epidyolex® 100 mg/ml oral solution: summary of product characteristics. 2025. Available from: <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/10781/smpc/print> (Accessed 29 May 2024). 2. European Medicines Agency. Epidyolex® 100 mg/ml oral solution: summary of product characteristics. 2024. Available from: https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/documents/product-information/epidyolex-epar-product-information_en.pdf (Accessed 20 September 2024). 3. US Food and Drug Administration. Epidiolex® Prescribing Information. 2024. Available from: https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/drugsatfda_docs/label/2024/210365s021lbl.pdf. (Accessed 29 May 2024).

Aristotle on causality

A firm grasp of what a **cause** is,
and how many kinds of causes there are,
is essential
for a successful investigation of the
world around us.

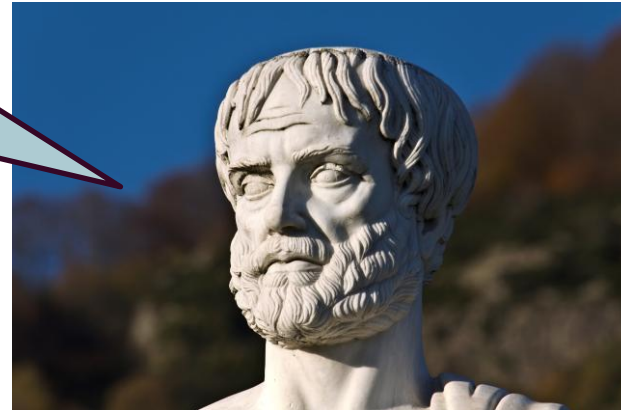


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Three-level causal hierarchy



3. Counterfactuals (imagining, retrospection)

What if I had done...?

Was it the treatment I took that stopped the symptom?

What if I had not taken it?

Infer probabilities under conditions that **change**
(could be manipulated)



2. Intervention (doing, intervening)

What if I do...?

If I take the treatment, will my symptom be cured?

What would we observe if all patients had taken $X=x$?



1. Association (observing, seeing)

What if I see...?

What does the symptom tell me about the disease?

Relationship between seizure reduction, CGIC, and CBD

What would be a reliable **causal-effect** relationship among key clinical factors in patients with LGS, DS, and TSC treated or not with CBD?

What would be the caregiver's perspective if a patient treated with CBD had a seizure reduction?
What if they had not been treated?

How do we characterise the **direct/indirect effects** that determine CGIC?



Image © iStock.com

CBD, cannabidiol; CGIC, Caregiver Global Impression of Change; DS, Dravet syndrome; LGS, Lennox-Gastaut syndrome; TSC, tuberous sclerosis complex.

Manipulation

Neyman (1923), Rubin (1974), Holland (1988)

No causation without manipulation^{1–5}

1. Neyman J. *Statistical Science*. 1990;5(4):463–480. 2. Holland PW. *J Am Stat Assoc*. 1986;81(396):945–960. 3. Holland PW. *ETS Research Report Series*. 2003(1):i–21. 4. Rubin DB. *Proc Soc Stat Sect Am Stat Assoc*. 1975:233–239. 5. Bauer PC. 2020. Available from: <https://bookdown.org/paul/applied-causal-analysis/causes-no-causation-without-manipulation.html>. (Accessed 19 April 2025).

Manipulation

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- Causes are only those things that could, **in principle**, be treatments in the experiment²

1. Neyman J. *Statistical Science*. 1990;5(4):463–480. 2. Holland PW. *J Am Stat Assoc*. 1986;81(396):945–960. 3. Holland PW. *ETS Research Report Series*. 2003(1):i–21. 4. Rubin DB. *Proc Soc Stat Sect Am Stat Assoc*. 1975:233–239. 5. Bauer PC. 2020. Available from: <https://bookdown.org/paul/applied-causal-analysis/causes-no-causation-without-manipulation.html>. (Accessed 19 April 2025).

Manipulation

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A randomized controlled trial is the best scientific method to assess causal effects

1. Neyman J. *Statistical Science*. 1990;5(4):463–480. 2. Holland PW. *J Am Stat Assoc*. 1986;81(396):945–960. 3. Holland PW. *ETS Research Report Series*. 2003(1):i–21. 4. Rubin DB. *Proc Soc Stat Sect Am Stat Assoc*. 1975:233–239. 5. Bauer PC. 2020. Available from: <https://bookdown.org/paul/applied-causal-analysis/causes-no-causation-without-manipulation.html>. (Accessed 19 April 2025).

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Manipulation

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- Causes are **experiences** that units undergo, not attributes that they possess³

Estimate causal effect for interventions that we can imagine being randomised in a **hypothetical trial** (EMULATION)

No direct intervention	Intervention
Race	Name on CV
Obesity	Bariatric surgery
Social economical status	Gift of money

→ Manipulable, potentially actionable, well defined

→ Contrafactuals versus observed outcome

1. Neyman J. *Statistical Science*. 1990;5(4):463–480. 2. Holland PW. *J Am Stat Assoc*. 1986;81(396):945–960. 3. Holland PW. *ETS Research Report Series*. 2003(1):i–21. 4. Rubin DB. *Proc Soc Stat Sect Am Stat Assoc*. 1975:233–239. 5. Bauer PC. 2020. Available from: <https://bookdown.org/paul/applied-causal-analysis/causes-no-causation-without-manipulation.html>. (Accessed 19 April 2025).

Treatment-resistant epilepsies and cannabidiol (CBD)

Lennox-Gastaut syndrome (**LGS**)

Dravet syndrome (**DS**)

Tuberous sclerosis complex (**TSC**)

LGS, DS, and TSC-associated seizures are rare, severe **treatment-resistant epilepsies** with onset in infancy or early childhood^{1–3}



Epidyolex® is a plant-derived, highly purified **CBD oral solution** (100 mg/mL) that is approved in the UK⁴ and EU⁵ in patients ≥2 years of age, as adjunctive **treatment for seizures associated with:**

- **LGS** or **DS**, in conjunction with clobazam
- **TSC**

CBD, cannabidiol; DS, Dravet syndrome; LGS, Lennox-Gastaut syndrome; TSC, tuberous sclerosis complex.

1. Specchio N, et al. *Epilepsia*. 2022;63(6):1398–1442. 2. Zuberi SM, et al. *Epilepsia*. 2022;63(6):1349–1397. 3. Specchio N, et al. *Eur J Paediatr Neurol*. 2023;47:25–34. 4. Electronic Medicines Compendium (eMC). Epidyolex® 100 mg/ml oral solution: summary of product characteristics. 2025. Available from: <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/10781/smpc/print>. (Accessed 29 May 2024);

5. European Medicines Agency. Epidyolex® 100 mg/ml oral solution: summary of product characteristics. 2024. Available from: https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/documents/product-information/epidyolex-epar-product-information_en.pdf (Accessed 29 May 2024).

Caregiver Global Impression of Change (CGIC)

- **CGIC** is a scale used to assess overall change in a patient's condition from the perspective of their caregiver^{1,2}

Three main domains for ratings

- **Overall improvement or deterioration** in condition
- **QoL**
- **Functional status**

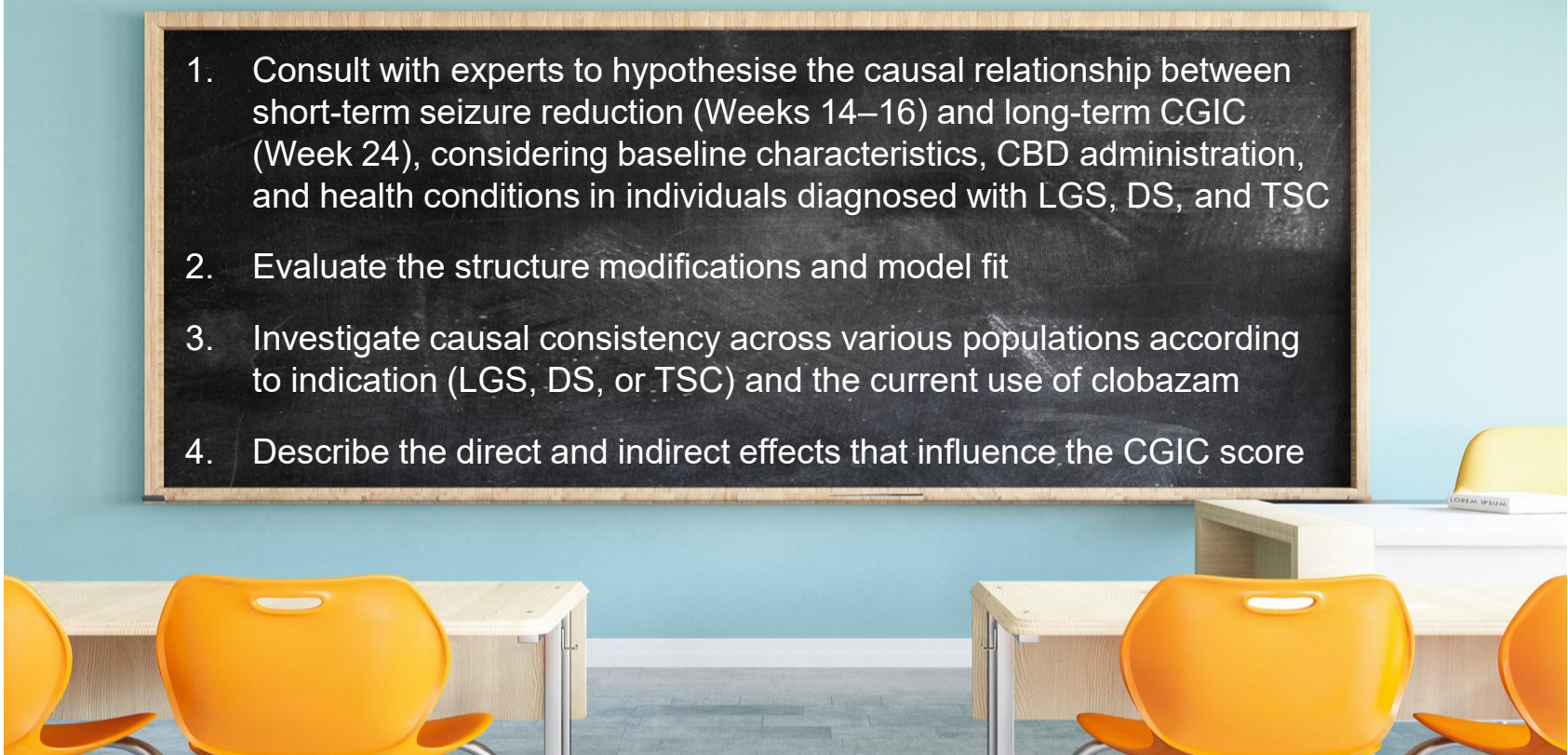


CGIC, Caregiver Global Impression of Change; QoL, quality of life.

1. Devinsky O, et al. *N Engl J Med*. 2017;376(21):2011–2020. 2. Berg AT, et al. *Epilepsy Res*. 2024;200:107280.

Objectives:

Relationship between seizure reduction, CGIC, and CBD

- 
- A classroom setting with a chalkboard and orange chairs. The chalkboard is black with white text listing four objectives. The room has light blue walls and wooden desks.
1. Consult with experts to hypothesise the causal relationship between short-term seizure reduction (Weeks 14–16) and long-term CGIC (Week 24), considering baseline characteristics, CBD administration, and health conditions in individuals diagnosed with LGS, DS, and TSC
 2. Evaluate the structure modifications and model fit
 3. Investigate causal consistency across various populations according to indication (LGS, DS, or TSC) and the current use of clobazam
 4. Describe the direct and indirect effects that influence the CGIC score

CBD, cannabidiol; CGIC, Caregiver Global Impression of Change; DS, Dravet syndrome; LGS, Lennox-Gastaut syndrome; TSC, tuberous sclerosis complex.

Available data sources

Pooled from RCTs plus OLEs¹⁻⁷ of highly purified CBD (100 mg/mL oral solution)

Population	Number of patients in RCTs	Number of patients with CGIC assessment during OLE (%)
Overall	960	371 (39%)
LGS	396	138 (35%)
DS	319	86 (27%)
TSC	245	147 (60%)
CBD/Placebo + clobazam users	459	173 (38%)

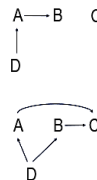
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1. Devinsky O, et al. *N Engl J Med*. 2018;378(20):1888–1897 (NCT02224560). 2. Thiele EA, et al. *Lancet*. 2018;391(10125):1085–1096 (NCT02224690). 3. Devinsky O, et al. *N Engl J Med*. 2017;376(21):2011–2020 (NCT02091375). 4. Miller I, et al. *JAMA Neurol*. 2020;77(5):613–621 (NCT02224703). 5. Patel AD, et al. *Epilepsia*. 2021;62(9):2228–2239 (NCT02224573). 6. Thiele EA, et al. *JAMA Neurol*. 2021;78(3):285–292 (NCT02544763). 7. ClinicalTrials.gov. NCT02544750. Updated 14 July 2022. Available from: <https://clinicaltrials.gov/study/NCT02544750>. (Accessed April 2025).

Structural causal model

Pearl (1995)

1. Structural Equation Model (SEM): system of structural functions assumed to be autonomous (each function is invariant to possible changes in the form of the other functions)
2. Potential-outcome framework (Neyman-Rubin causal model)
3. Graphical models
 - Assumptions/causal effects directly derivable from the causal graph (eg, variable role, causal relationship, covariance, d-separation, sufficient set)
 - Probabilistic approach to causation

DAG



PROBABILITY FUNCTION

$$P(A, B, C, D) = P(C) P(D) P(A|D) P(B|A)$$

$$P(A, B, C, D) = P(D) P(A|D) P(B|D) P(C|A, B)$$

Structural causal model

Pearl (1995)

- **do-notation:**

$$p(y|\text{do}(x_0))$$

Probability that event $Y = y$ would occur if treatment condition $X = x_0$ were enforced uniformly over the population
[and let x_0 take different values on hypothetical copies of the population]

Structural causal model

Pearl (1995)

- **do-notation:**

$$p(y|\text{do}(x_0))$$

Probability that event $Y = y$ would occur if treatment condition $X = x_0$ were enforced uniformly over the population
[and let x_0 take different values on hypothetical copies of the population]

- Extension of *effect* concept:

Algebraic representation as a coefficient in an equation → general capacity to transmit changes among variables

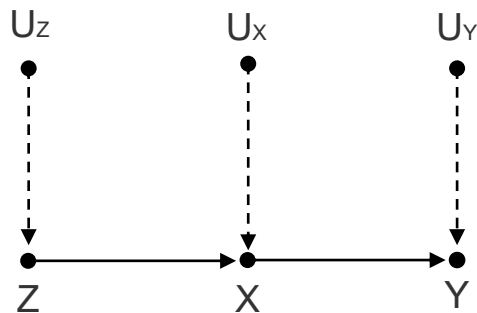
Structural causal model

To **confirm** relationships between factors.

It can be interpreted for cause and effect when the following conditions are met:

1. The hypothesised relationship (model structure) is a **valid representation** of reality
2. The factors' dependencies are **directed and acyclic**
3. Variables, conditioned on their parents, are **independent of their ancestors**
4. No possibility to come back from cause to effect (and no spurious correlations)

Structural causal model



Exogenous variables: background (unexplained) factors

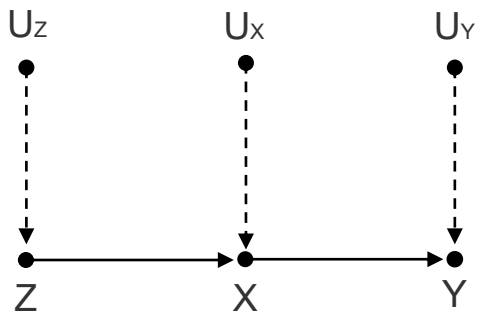
Endogenous variables: influenced by other factors

$$z = f_Z(u_Z)$$

$$x = f_X(z, u_X)$$

$$y = f_Y(x, u_Y)$$

Structural causal model



$$z = f_Z(u_Z)$$

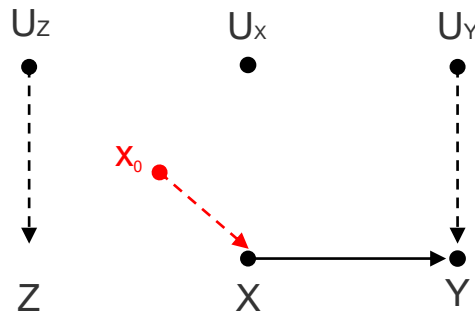
$$x = f_X(z, u_X)$$

$$y = f_Y(x, u_Y)$$

pre-intervention join distribution

$$P(z, x, y)$$

do(X=x₀)



$$z = f_Z(u_Z)$$

$$x = x_0$$

$$y = f_Y(x, u_Y)$$

post-intervention join distribution

$$P(z, y \mid \text{do}(x_0))$$

Structural causal model

Identification question

*Can the controlled (post-intervention) distribution $P(z, y \mid d(x))$
be estimated from the data by the pre-intervention distribution $P(z, x, y)$?*

Structural causal model

Identification question

Causal Markov Condition + Truncated Factorization

For any Markovian model, the distribution generated by an intervention $\text{do}(X=x_0)$ on a set of endogenous variables (V_i) , is given by

$$P(V_1, V_2, \dots, V_n \mid \text{do}(X_0)) = \prod_{V_i \neq X} P(V_i \mid \text{pa}_i) \mid_{X=x_0}$$

$$P(z, y \mid \text{do}(x_0)) = P(z) P(y \mid x_0)$$

$$P(\cancel{x} \mid z) \text{ trunked because } x=x_0$$

Pa, parent variable.

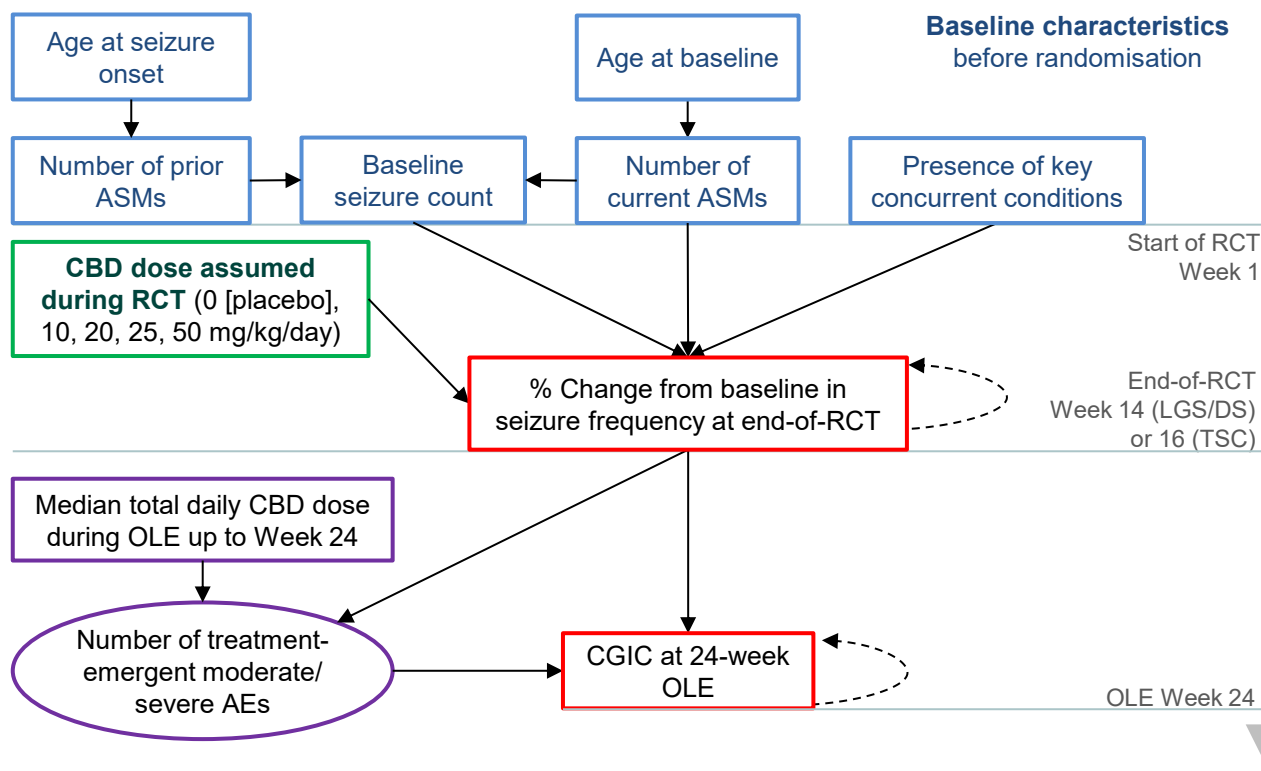
Pearl J. *Statistics Surveys*. 2009;3:96–146.

Application of SCM methodology to CBD trial data

Steps to investigate the reliability of the assumed clinical pathway are the following:

1. **Draw** your hypothesised path diagram
2. **Fit** the structural equation models
3. **Assess** the fit
4. **Refine** (modify) the model
5. **Repeat** steps 2, 3, and 4
6. **Display** final model diagram
7. Assess **Causality**

Assumed path diagram



- An initial causal-effect relationship between end-of-RCT seizure reduction and Week 24 CGIC (during the OLE) was defined in consultation with clinical experts
- The final SCM was selected using **model fit statistics, model modification statistics, regression pathways ($P < 0.05$), and clinical reliability**

AE, adverse event; ASM, antiseizure medication; CBD, cannabidiol; CGIC, Caregiver Global Impression of Change; DS, Dravet syndrome; LGS, Lennox-Gastaut syndrome; OLE, open-label extension; RCT, randomised controlled trial; TSC, tuberous sclerosis complex.

Model fit statistics

Index	Cut-off for a good fit
-------	------------------------

Absolute indices to compare the fitted model to a saturated model without accounting for model complexity:

★ Chi-square test	$P\text{-value} > 0.05$
★ Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)	< 0.08

Parsimony indices quantify the data fitting by penalising model complexity given from an increased number of parameters:

Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	< 0.05 = close fit < 0.08 = mediocre fit > 0.1 = poor fit Narrow 90% confidence interval
Probability of Close Fit (PROBCLFIT) A chi-square test in which the null hypothesis is 'close fit'	$P\text{-value} > 0.05$
Bozdogan Criterion Akaike's Information Criterion (CAIC)	Smaller is better
Schwarz Bayesian Criterion (SBC)	Smaller is better
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)	> 0.90

Incremental indices to compare the fitted model to the null model:

★ Bentler Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	> 0.90
Bentler-Bonett Non-Normed Index (NNFI) or Tucker Lewis Index (TLI)	> 0.90

1. Kline, RB. Principles and practice of structural equation modeling (4th Edn) The Guildford Press, 2015. 2. Madhanagopal B, Amrhein J. Paper 3765-2019 and 3240-2019 Analyzing Structural Causal Models Using the CALIS Procedure. McDougall Scientific Ltd, 2019. 3. Statistika. Goodness of fit Index. 2023. Available from: <https://www.statistika.co/index.php/research-methods/sem-amos/goodness-of-fit-index-gfi> (Accessed 12 May 2025).

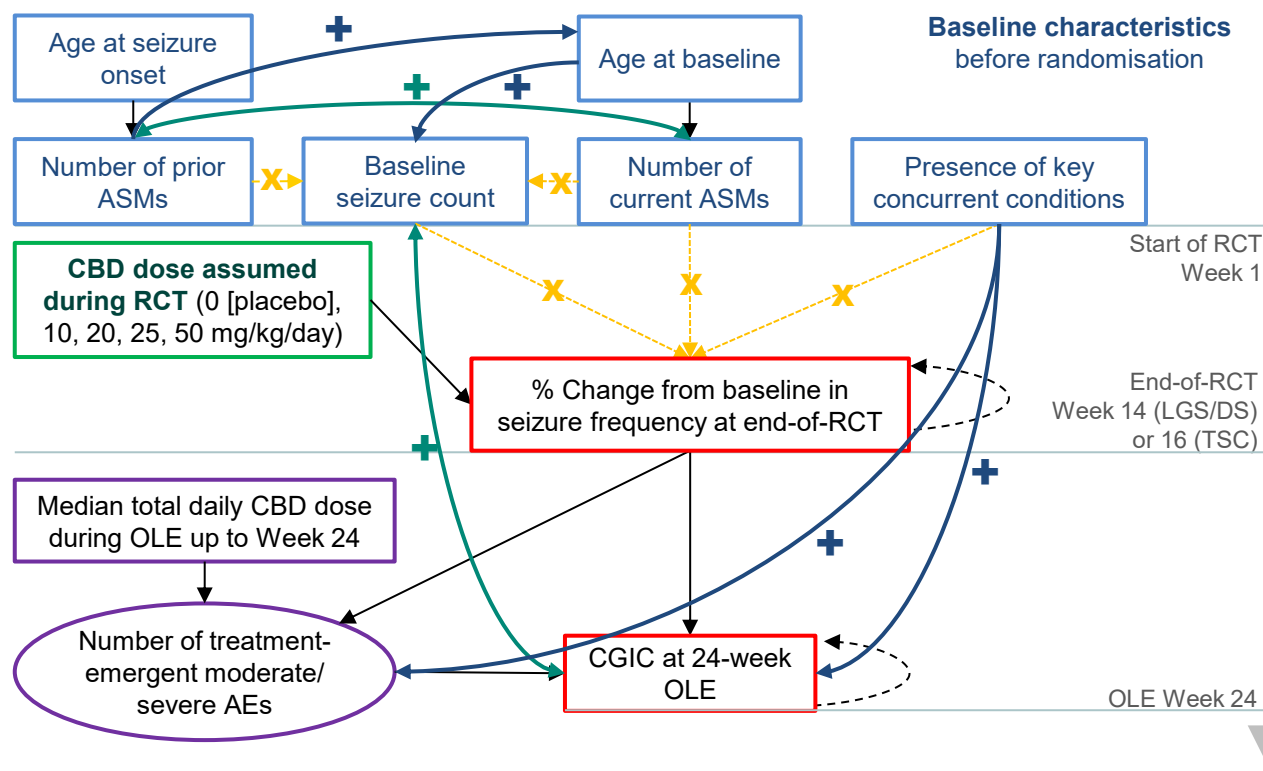
Modification index

To advise on ways to improve the fit of the structural model.

- **Lagrange Multiplier (LM)** statistic suggests which parameters and error variances-covariances could be **included** in the model to improve the model fit in terms of chi-square value
- **Wald Test Indices** suggest paths to **remove** without affecting the chi-square statistic

Given that the modifications suggested by the LM and Wald statistics might not be substantively meaningful,
it is important to consult experts before applying any analytical modification to the hypothesised model

Modified structural causal model



AE, adverse event; ASM, antiseizure medication; CBD, cannabidiol; CGIC, Caregiver Global Impression of Change; DS, Dravet syndrome; LGS, Lennox-Gastaut syndrome; OLE, open-label extension; RCT, randomised controlled trial; TSC, tuberous sclerosis complex.

Proc calis

```
proc calis data=webcov toteff mod;
```

Mediation analysis and modified index

```
fitindex on(only) = [chisq df probchi srmsr rmsea agfi cfi];
```

Fit statistics

```
path
```

```
prASM ---> ageBL = prASM_AgeBL,  
com ---> AE CGI = com_AE com_CGI,  
TRT ---> seizCHG1 = TRT_seizCHG,  
seizCHG1 ---> CGI = seizCHG_CGI;
```

Path coefficients

```
pcov
```

```
prASM curASM = cov_prASM_curASM,  
seizBL1 CGI = cov_seizBL1_CGI
```

Error covariances

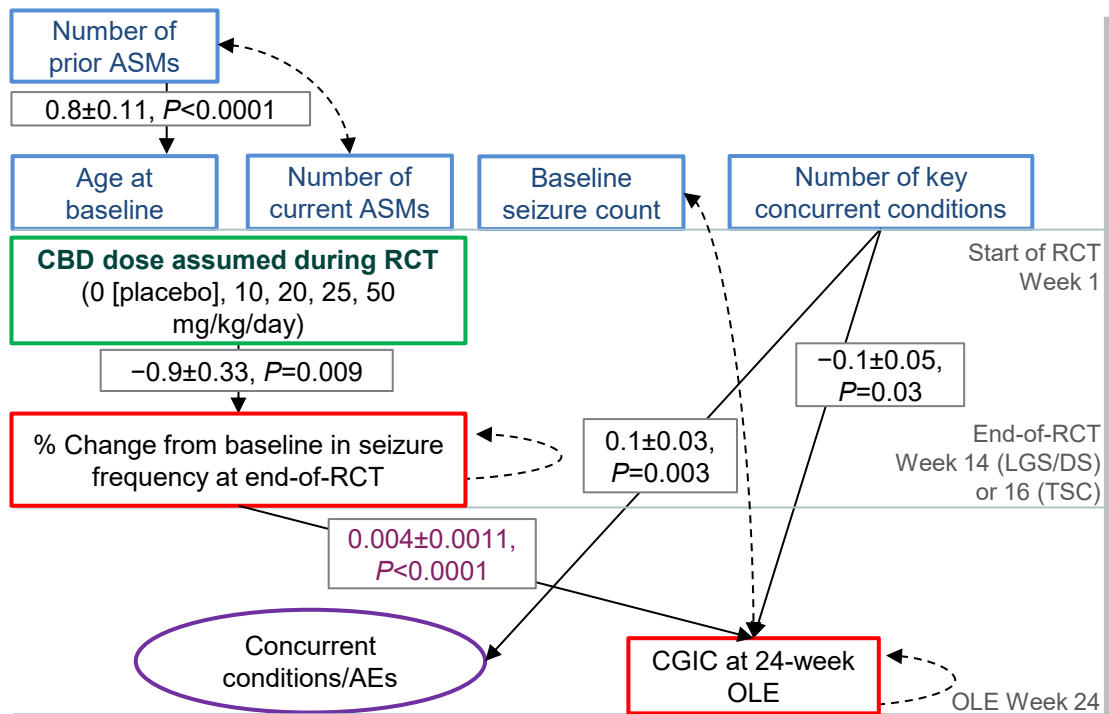
```
;
```

```
run;
```

1. Madhanagopal B, Amrhein J. Paper 3765-2019 and 3240-2019 Analyzing Structural Causal Models Using the CALIS Procedure. McDougall Scientific Ltd, 2019.

2. Yung YF. Introduction to structural equation modeling using the CALIS procedure in SAS/STAT® software. Presented at Joint Statistical Meeting; August 4, 2010; Vancouver, Canada.

Final structural causal model with path coefficient estimates



- Among the 371 patients overall, **a significant causal-effect relationship between seizure reduction and CGIC** was confirmed
- This relationship was also significant ($P < 0.05$) in patients with LGS (n=138) or TSC (n=147), but not in those with DS (n=86)

Data are estimates \pm standard error.

AE, adverse event; ASM, antiseizure medication; CBD, cannabidiol; CGIC, Caregiver Global Impression of Change; DS, Dravet syndrome; LGS, Lennox-Gastaut syndrome; OLE, open-label extension; RCT, randomised controlled trial; TSC, tuberous sclerosis complex.

Model fit statistics in the overall population

Fit summary N=371		Original model fit	Modified model fit	Final model fit
Absolute index	Chi-square	103.9384	85.1180	34.4911
	Chi-square DF	33	34	20
	Pr > Chi-square	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0230
	SRMR	0.0620	0.0578	0.0449
Parsimony index	AGFI	0.9078	0.9260	0.9554
	RMSEA estimate	0.0762	0.0637	0.0443
Incremental index	Bentler comparative fit index	0.6375	0.7388	0.8546

AGFI, adjusted goodness of fit index; DF, degrees of freedom; SRMR, standardised root mean square residual; RMSEA, root mean square error of approximation.

Path coefficient estimates in the overall population

Path (N=371)			Original model P-value	Modified model P-value	Final model P-value
Age at seizure onset	==>	Number of prior ASMs	0.7411	0.7411	
Number of prior ASMs	==>	Baseline seizure count	0.1097		
Number of prior ASMs	==>	Age at baseline		<0.0001	<0.0001
Age at baseline	==>	Number of current ASMs	0.0056		
Age at baseline	==>	Baseline seizure count		0.1113	
Number of current ASMs	==>	Baseline seizure count	0.8314		
Number of current ASMs	==>	% Change in seizure freq. at eoRCT	0.8792		
Baseline seizure count	==>	% Change in seiz. freq. at eoRCT	0.8208		
Presence of key concurrent cond.	==>	% Change in seiz. freq. at eoRCT	0.4238	0.4254	
Presence of key concurrent cond.	==>	Moderate/severe adverse events		0.0021	0.0031
Presence of key concurrent cond.	==>	CGIC		0.0214	0.0305
CBD dose assumed during RCT	==>	% Change in seiz. freq. at eoRCT	0.0089	0.0088	0.0088
% Change in seiz. freq. at eoRCT	==>	Moderate/severe adverse events	0.3030	0.3582	
% Change in seiz. freq. at eoRCT	==>	CGIC	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0001
Median daily CBD dose during OLE	==>	Moderate/severe adverse events	0.0827	0.0554	
Moderate/severe adverse events	==>	CGIC	0.4053	0.2059	

ASM, antiseizure medication; CBD, cannabidiol; CGIC, Caregiver Global Impression of Change; eoRCT, end-of-RCT; OLE, open-label extension; RCT, randomised controlled trial.

Model fit and parameter estimation in subpopulations

Seizure reduction-CGIC path coefficient estimate in subpopulations

Path		LGS (n=138)	DS (n=86)	TSC (n=147)	CBL users (n=173)
% Change in seiz. freq. at eoRCT	==> CGIC	0.0059	0.1748	0.0202	0.0257

Model fit statistics in subpopulations

Fit summary		LGS (n=138)	DS (n=86)	TSC (n=147)	CBL users (n=173)
Absolute index	Chi-square	20.8120	37.9957	30.0175	27.6497
	Chi-square DF	20	20	20	20
	Pr > Chi-square	0.4083	0.0089	0.0696	0.1180
	SRMR	0.0579	0.0808	0.0626	0.0602
Parsimony index	AGFI	0.9292	0.8269	0.9087	0.9158
	RMSEA estimate	0.0172	0.1029	0.0586	0.0512
Incremental index	Bentler comparative fit index	0.9673	0.6631	0.5947	0.6711

AGFI, adjusted goodness of fit index; CBL, clobazam; CGIC, Caregiver Global Impression of Change; DF, degrees of freedom; DS, Dravet syndrome; eoRCT, end-of-RCT; LGS, Lennox-Gastaut syndrome; RCT, randomised controlled trial; RMSEA, root mean square error of approximation; SRMR, standardised root mean square residual; TSC, tuberous sclerosis complex.

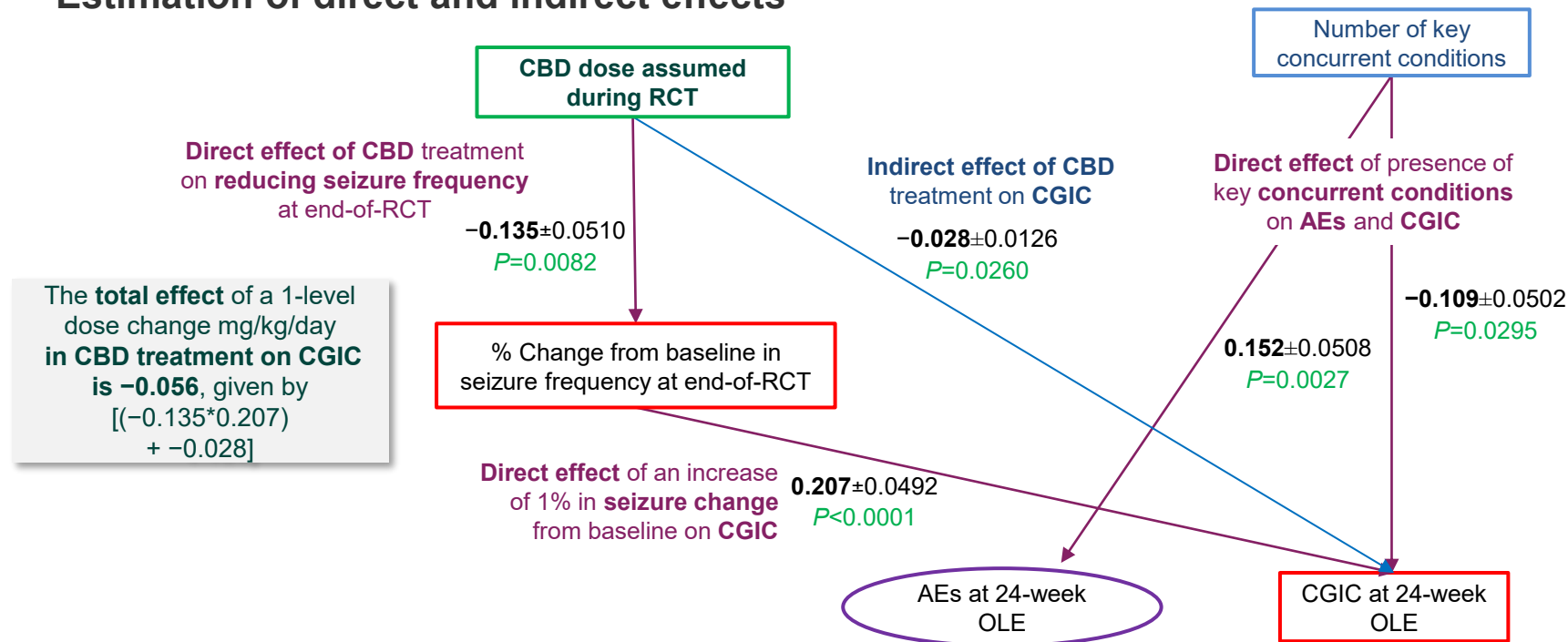
Mediation analysis

To evaluate the existence of direct connections (ie, no mediation variables between the parent and child nodes) or indirect connections (ie, existence of intermediate pathways between nodes)

- **Complete mediation:** The causal effect is only through the mediator: significant indirect path coefficient and not significant direct path coefficient
- **Partial mediation:** Part of the causal effect is mediated by a third variable: significant indirect and direct path coefficients
- **Inconsistent mediation:** Direct and indirect effects have different significant signs

Causal relationship: Effects on CGIC

Estimation of direct and indirect effects



Data are estimates \pm standard error.

AE, adverse event; CBD, cannabidiol; CGIC, Caregiver Global Impression of Change; OLE, open-label extension; RCT, randomised controlled trial.

Conclusions

- This analysis confirmed the expected **causal-effect relationship between seizure reduction and improvement in CGIC** (measuring overall condition, quality of life, and functional status)
 - The relationship was consistent in the LGS and TSC subpopulations
- No baseline characteristics were deemed useful to select patients who may benefit from treatment
- The **causal relationship is driven by CBD administration, seizure reduction, and concurrent conditions at baseline**
 - The presence of moderate/severe adverse events is not a determinant of CGIC

The findings of this analysis may represent meaningful insights for considering nonseizure endpoints, such as CGIC, as key outcomes in future clinical trials of CBD as disease-modifying treatment

Thank You