

Medical Cannabis – Implications for Pharmacists

CANADIAN PHARMACISTS ASSOCIATION

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CANADIAN PHARMACISTS ASSOCIATION

Canadian Pharmacists Association

- National voice of Canada's 42,000 pharmacists
- Our mission is to advance the health and well-being of Canadians through excellence in pharmacist care.



Objectives

- To provide an overview of the role of the pharmacist and implications as health care professionals with patients using medical cannabis.
- To review and provide background behind CPhA's recommendations with respect to medical cannabis and the role of pharmacists.
- To identify further areas of opportunity with respect to cannabis and the role of pharmacists and the pharmacy profession.

Pharmacists

- Pharmacists act as **medication stewards** on behalf of Canadians
- Most **accessible** health care professionals
- 10,000 pharmacies in urban, rural and remote settings
- Regular and frequent **touchpoints** with patients in their communities



Pharmacists

- More than 235,000 registered patients with licensed producers.*
- Surveys of patients using medical cannabis indicated that 70% or more believe that its use results in moderate or better improvement in symptoms.**
- Pharmacists approached by patients and prescribers about use of cannabis for variety of indications
- Pharmacists manage controlled substances every day
- No current opportunity to include consultation and **oversight** from medication experts at time of dispensing
- Patients need support from HCPs across circle of care to ensure **patient safety**



* Health Canada. Market Data. Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/medical-use-marijuana/licensed-producers/market-data.html>. Updated on January 04, 2018. Accessed on March 7, 2018.

**Allan M, Finley C, Ton J, et al. Systematic review of systematic reviews for medical cannabinoids. *Can Fam Physician*. 2018;64(2):e87-94. <http://www.cfp.ca/content/64/2/e78>. Published February 2018.



CPhA Recommendations

- Informed by:
 - Growing concern among profession about lack of clinical oversight in distribution of medical cannabis
 - Consultations and input from pharmacists
 - Taskforce Recommendations
 - Independent report*
 - Public opinion polling



* KPMG - (Improving Medical Marijuana Management in Canada (March 2016))

CPhA Recommendations – Medical Stream

1. Ensure **distinction** between recreational and medical cannabis
2. Support and **include pharmacists** in management and distribution of medical cannabis
3. Enhance and support **increased research** into medical cannabis
4. **Restrict terms such as “dispensary”** or pharmacy-related symbols such as green cross for recreational distribution
5. **Establish pricing** for recreational marijuana that would not encourage patient diversion from medical cannabis stream
6. Regulate recreational cannabis through lens of **health promotion**



Two Distinct Streams

- Unique needs of medical patients
- Harm reduction
- Patients should not be expected to self medicate without support from HCPs
- Protecting supply chain to meet patients needs
- Could lead to more systemic benefits – more robust evidence base
- Other jurisdictions treat medical stream as unique



Support and Include Pharmacists In Management and Distribution of Medical cannabis

- Pharmacists can leverage expertise re: benefits and harms alone and in context of entire medication history - participate in **shared and informed decision making**
- Pharmacists well positioned - should be part of circle of care
- Pharmacists are regulated HCPs – follow code of ethics

Pharmacists – Dispensing Medical Cannabis

- Surveys demonstrate pharmacists believe they have a role in dispensing medical cannabis as an essential part of managing a patient's drug therapy
- Education and professional development needs being addressed
- Regulatory approaches to dispensing could be national or provincial
- Health products containing cannabis



Enhance and Support Increased Research

- Understanding of efficacy and safety is evolving
 - Limited evidence re: optimal dosing, strains, drug interactions
- Limited evidence re: benefit
- Consistent evidence re: adverse effects
- Research will be facilitated by keeping medical stream separate and through pharmacist dispensing



Restricting Use of Pharmacy Related Terms and Symbols

- Terms and symbols promote notion that recreational marijuana has health benefits
- Compounds risk of misunderstanding that distribution site is pharmacy or has professional oversight from pharmacists



Establish Pricing that Would not Encourage Diversion from Medical Stream

- Limited coverage with some insurance providers - but most patients paying out of pocket
- Cost and taxes will be important considerations
- Risk of diverting medical cannabis patients away from the medical system for reasons of cost and convenience



Regulate Recreational Cannabis Distribution Through Lens of Health Promotion

- Public Education regarding risks associated with use of marijuana
- Establishment of minimum age
- Product packaging containing warnings of risks
- Rigorous product management regulations
- Mandated training for retail staff on differentiation between medical and recreational use and directing medical users to HCPs



CPhA Evidence Based Resources and Tools

- FAQ – answers to commonly asked questions by practitioners and patients
- Education – two CE programs
- Evidence Guide - curated summary of best available evidence - living document
- Cannabis monograph – to help HCPs work with patients and make informed, evidence based decisions

Closing Thoughts

- Complex evolving therapeutic area with limited understanding and evolving evidence
- Patient safety is paramount and pharmacists should be partners in a patient focused framework
- Protect unique needs and access for medical patients
- Strengthen clinical oversight in medical stream with pharmacists integral in circle of care

Questions?

