
Medical Marijuana in an Age of Legal Recreational Marijuana

With recreational marijuana becoming legal across Canada this October, the prevalence of marijuana use may increase, and patients may also be more open to discussing with their physicians their use of marijuana. As part of the routine history-taking, physicians should discuss recreational marijuana use with their patients, similar to the manner of discussing alcohol or cigarette smoking.

Although recreational marijuana will be available in government approved retail operations, medical marijuana will still require an authorization and be obtained only through a licensed producer.

As a reminder, the College in its Standards of Practice contains a standard on medical marijuana. These standards are compulsory, not optional. This standard will continue unaltered following the legalization of recreational marijuana.

Marijuana (Cannabis) for Medical Purposes

- 26(1) Although members may authorize the use of medical marijuana, they are not required to do so if they do not feel it is warranted for a patient.
- 26(2) Prior to authorizing marijuana for a patient, a member must:
- (a) make a conventional diagnosis using the principles of good medical care set out in s. 2 of this by-law;
 - (b) ensure that other conventional therapies have been tried for the patient's condition;
 - (c) discuss with the patient all potential risks and benefits and the lack of clear scientific evidence supporting the efficacy of the proposed treatment;
 - (d) document on the patient record the discussions with the patient and the medical reasons for which the marijuana is authorized.
- 26(3) A member may not be legally or beneficially involved in any way with a licensed producer and may not directly make any application to become a licensed producer.
- 26(4) A member must keep a separate log for all authorizations for the use of medical marijuana which must include the following information:
- patient's name;
 - patient's personal health identification number;
 - condition for which the marijuana was authorized;
 - quantity and dosages of marijuana authorized.
- The separate record must be available for inspection by the College at any time.
- 26(5) A member must establish a process to report any misuse or abuse of medical marijuana by the patient.
- 26(6) The member must not:
- (a) authorize marijuana if the member is not the primary treating physician for the condition for which the marijuana is authorized or part of a practice group that is collectively treating the patient for the condition for which the marijuana is being authorized and has shared access to the patient's record;

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- (b) examine the patient at the premises of a licensed producer or a location provided by or subsidized by a licensed producer;
 - (c) dispense or provide marijuana to any patient.

Physicians who have a business interest or arrangement with a medical or recreational marijuana corporation may wish to refresh their memory of sections 48-51 “Conflict of Interest Involving Financial or Personal Gain in the Care of a Patient” from the same Standards of Practice to ensure compliance. The Standards of Practice document is found at this link:

<http://cpsm.mb.ca/cji39alckF30a/wp-content/uploads/ByLaws/By-Law-11.pdf>

Physicians with such a business interest or arrangement may contact the College to discuss compliance with the Standards or contact CMPA.

Manitoba Health & The University of Montreal Awareness Campaign Relating to Opioids

Manitoba Health, in collaboration with researchers at the University of Montreal, will be undertaking a public awareness campaign relating to opioids for the treatment of chronic non-cancer pain. Manitobans who are receiving chronic opioids treatment will be randomized into two time periods to receive education in the mail during the course of the coming year. It is important to note that neither funding or access to medications will be altered for recipients of the public awareness brochure.

Members may be contacted by their patients who receive this communication to discuss their opioid prescriptions.

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