Therapeutic Cannabis and Your Practice

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Marilyn
Your response

- What advice would you offer with regard to the use of marijuana to alleviate her current symptoms?
- Do you believe that the overall medicinal benefits of marijuana outweigh the risks and potential harms?
Cannabis History

- 4000 years of therapeutic, recreational, and spiritual use
- Chinese emperor Shen-Nung is believed to have prescribed cannabis
- "Used to treat an endless variety of human miseries"
Cannabis in America

1850-1930

Included in the Pharmacopoeia

Prescribed Liberally
Prohibition

- 1937 Marihuana tax
- 1942 Removal from the US Dispensatory
- 1970 Controlled substance act and class 1 designation of cannabis
Evidence
Active compounds

- Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC): euphoria
- Cannabidiol (CBD): analgesia and balances THC's euphoric effects
Marijuana and Physiology:

**Bodily effects of Cannabis**

**Eyes:**
- Reddening
- Decreased intra-ocular pressure

**Mouth:**
- Dryness

**Skin:**
- Sensation of heat or cold

**Heart:**
- Increased heart rate

**Muscles:**
- Relaxation

**Health Risks**

**THC in your body.**
You’re only high for a few hours. But chemical traces of marijuana, called **THC metabolites**, stay in your body for a month or more. THC metabolites are stored in the brain, testes, ovaries, and other fatty organs, and are detectable by urine tests.

**Lungs.** Marijuana smoke irritates the throat and lungs and has twice as much “tar” as cigarette smoke. Frequent use is linked to an increased risk of lung cancer, bronchitis, and emphysema.

**Brain.** Marijuana inhibits short-term memory, slows reaction time, and impairs visual tracking (the ability to follow moving objects accurately). Frequent use is also linked to cognitive impairment (an inability to abstract and understand concepts).

**Heart.** Marijuana speeds a user’s heartbeat as much as 50% while high, an increased risk for anyone with heart disease.
Delivery system
Benefits

- Stimulate appetite particularly in AIDS wasting syndrome
- Nausea and vomiting control among chemotherapy patients
- Decrease spasticity
- Decrease pain
No Benefit

• Glaucoma

• Epilepsy

• Alzheimer’s Disease
Risks

• Can the recreational use of marijuana cause cognitive impairment? The most obvious answer is ‘yes’—after all, this is the basic reason for its recreational use.”

Risks

- Dependence
- Withdrawal
- Intolerance of psychoactive effects
- Trigger or exacerbate psychosis
- Cyclical vomiting
- Physiological changes
- Recreational use

Recreational Use Predicts Medicinal Use
Risks of early use

- Psychosis
- Schizophrenia
- Substance abuse
- Physical injuries & psychosomatic symptoms, academic failure, & delinquency
- Lifelong tobacco dependence
- Exacerbate anxiety disorders and substance abuse
Policy Solutions

- Change to schedule 2 and conduct peer reviewed RCTs
- Medicine by popular demand
- Legalize for all uses
California 1996

THE GREEN DOCTORS

$40

MEDICAL MARIJUANA EVALUATION
Oregon 1998
WEED!
WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?
ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING!
New Hampshire

- 2009, 2012 - medical marijuana bills passed but vetoed by Gov. Lynch
- 2013 - medical marijuana bills passed and signed by Gov. Hassan
- July 2014 - NH HHS Administrative rules published
- August 2015
Therapeutic Cannabis Law in New Hampshire

Cancer
Glaucoma
HIV/AIDS
Hepatitis C on antiviral tx
ALS, MS
Muscular dystrophy
Crohn’s disease
Agitation of Alzheimer’s
Chronic pancreatitis
Spinal cord injury or disease
Traumatic brain injury

Elevated intraocular pressure
Cachexia
Chemotherapy-induced anorexia
Wasting syndrome
Severe pain
Constant or severe nausea,
Moderate to severe vomiting,
Seizures
Severe, persistent muscle spasms.
NH Requirements

- Certifying diagnosis AND symptoms not relieved by conventional treatments
- Minimum of three months patient-doctor relationship
- Face-to-face visit with a documented history and physical exam with a diagnosis and treatment plan
- Board of medicine will treat decisions to certify cannabis the same as other medications...you make the call based on your assessment
2 Ounce Limit
NHMS Survey

• Emailed survey to 2642 physicians and 900 ARNP

• 467 physician responses and 64 ARNP responses
How often have you recommend Therapeutic Cannabis

How often have you recommend Cannabinoid Medication

Will you be willing to certify patients for clinical cannabis?
How would you rate your knowledge of clinical cannabis?

- 64%
- 36%
Practice Considerations

- Practice identity
- Word of mouth effect
- Inpatient issues
- Pain agreements and urine toxicology
"We can do expensive blood work, take x-rays, check your prostate ... or I could sell you some great weed for $50."
Marilyn

- Would you do something differently now?