



Operationalizing the College standard on cannabis for medical purposes

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Relationship with commercial interests:

- None
- No pecuniary interest in, or receipt from, pharmaceutical, medical device, or communications companies

Disclosure of commercial support:

- No perceived potential conflicts of interest

The College expects the following from registrants

- Apply foundational medical principles (primum non nocere) and standards of care
- Recognize that **no physician is obligated** to provide a medical document in circumstances where s/he believes that treatment is not indicated
- The authorizing/prescribing physician should be primarily responsible for managing the care for that particular clinical condition
- **Assessment and authorizing cannabis as a stand-alone service is suboptimal**

As with any drug, physicians should only provide authorization/prescribe if they know and understand

- Risks and benefits of treatment
- Potential complications
- Drug interactions

Cannabis is generally **not** appropriate for the following patients

- <25 y old
- Personal Hx psychosis
- Strong FHx psychosis
- Current (or past) cannabis use disorder
- Active substance use disorder
- Cardiovascular disease
- Respiratory disease
- Pregnant
- Breastfeeding

Important steps before considering medicinal cannabis as treatment

- Comprehensive medical assessment including:
 - history of presenting symptoms including treatments that have been trialed previously
 - substance use history with review of clinical chart for corroborating information (head injury, past substance use, past psychiatric history, past use of prescribed psychoactive medication)
 - examination and screening (including mental state examination and addiction risk tool)
 - urine toxicology
 - lab work
 - check PharmaNet

Before providing authorization

- Clearly document rationale for prescribing
- Discuss and document risks of cannabis including cannabis use disorder, psychosis, sedation, and cognitive impairment
- Fully inform patients on THC:Cannabidiol potency issues and include discussion on individual variability in therapeutic response
- Apply harm mitigation procedures (e.g. discuss and document reaction times, driving/heavy machinery advice, avoidance of other sedating agents)
- Use a start low, go slow approach
- Retain a copy of the addiction risk tool and the authorization in the chart

Longitudinal assessment (q 3-6 months)

- Assess for therapeutic efficacy in the individual – review benefits and side-effects
- Mental health evaluation including use of other substances
- Include processes to identify misuse, abuse, or diversion
- Review PharmaNet before any reassessment or annual reauthorization
- Reiterate driving advice
- Reiterate safety advice including use of other substances

The College recognizes that there may be
exceptional circumstances where
compassionate flexibility is required

In those exceptional circumstances, the following is prerequisite

- Clear documentation of rationale for prescribing outside the Standard
- Harm mitigation – driving, other drugs (licit and illicit)
- Strategy for monitoring for adverse events such as mental health destabilization
- Consider speaking with the CMPA or the deputy registrar of the drug programs if you are uncertain

How does the College handle complaints?

Enforcement of College standards is largely complaints-driven

- The College has an obligation to investigate complaints
- Registrants have an obligation to respond to allegations of noncompliance

The College takes a remedial approach

- No physician has been disciplined for good faith application of their clinical judgement
- However, that clinical judgement must be made by means of a comprehensive and well-documented clinical evaluation
- If a decision to provide the authorization is made, there must be further documentation of risk reduction and monitoring strategies
- If a decision to not provide the authorization is made, there must be clear documentation of reasons and an updated management plan

For more information



Visit:

- <https://www.cma.ca/En/Pages/medical-marijuana.aspx>
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/medical-use-marijuana/information-medical-practitioners.html>
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/medical-use-marijuana/information-medical-practitioners/information-health-care-professionals-cannabis-marihuana-marijuana-cannabinoids.html>

Thank you

- Questions?
- www.cpsbc.ca

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