



College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia

Communications Briefing Note

Cannabis

College position

Few reliable published studies are available on the medical benefits of cannabis. The amount of active ingredients in cannabis varies significantly, depending on the origin and method of production of the substance.

Physicians are advised that they should not prescribe any substance for their patients without knowing the risks, benefits, potential complications and drug interactions associated with the use of that agent. Physicians may be the subject of accusations or suggestions of negligence, including liability if the use of cannabis produces unforeseen or unidentified negative effects.

Key messages

- As with any drug, physicians must not prescribe any substance for their patients without knowing the risks, benefits, potential complications and drug interactions associated with the use of that agent.
- As a regulator, the College's focus is not on the merits of cannabis as a therapy but on the professional and ethical conduct of physicians who authorize patient access to cannabis for medical purposes.
- The conversation on medical cannabis is ever-changing, and as further medical evidence is published or legal frameworks evolve, additional revisions to the College's practice standard may be necessary.

Prescribing

The College considers the medical document authorizing patient access to cannabis to be equivalent to a prescription. Physicians must not charge patients or licensed producers of cannabis for completing the medical document, or for any activities associated with completing the medical document including but not limited to: assessing the patient; reviewing the patient's chart; educating or informing the patient about the risks or benefits of cannabis; or confirming the validity of a prescription in accordance with the *Cannabis Regulations* set out by the Government of Canada's Department of Justice.

Cannabis and telemedicine

In providing medical care using telecommunications technologies or using print, physicians cannot complete a document for the authorization of cannabis for medical purposes for a patient unless they have a longitudinal treating relationship with the patient, or are in direct communication with another physician or nurse practitioner who has a longitudinal treating relationship with the patient, and both are in well-documented agreement with issuing the document for the authorization of cannabis for medical purposes.

The physician who is authorizing cannabis for a particular clinical indication should be primarily responsible for managing the care for that condition and following up with the patient regularly.

Reference

- College Practice Standard: [*Cannabis for Medical Purposes*](#)