

Medical Marijuana Health & Safety





Objectives

- Define medical marijuana (MM)
 - Is it legal?
 - Is it safe?
- Medical prescription guidelines
- Current legislation
- How can it impact the workplace

Cannabis 101

- Why we don't call it Marijuana
- History of Cannabis
- What is Cannabis made up of: buds of female plant contain Trichomes



2 families of Cannabis that are common:



Medicinal & psychoactive properties from **Cannabinoids**

- **THC**– psychoactive; “high”
- **CBD** – *not psychoactive*, but known for various benefits: nausea reduction, pain reduction suppression of seizure activity, combating anxiety & depression disorders and has anti-inflammatory properties.

Is Medical Marijuana legal?

- Medical marijuana (MM) is medically-prescribed cannabis used to relieve symptoms of various medical conditions
- Legal with medical prescription from a physician (*in Ontario a Nurse Practitioner cannot prescribe MM)
- Compassion clubs & dispensaries that provide marijuana products are illegal
- Production and distribution of medical marijuana is licensed by Health Canada



Is MM safe?

- Addictive in less than 9% of people¹
- No one has overdosed and died from Cannabis use.
2014 Deaths in USA ² : 28,600 opioid prescription drugs; 88,000 alcohol-induced causes (not including drunk driving);
- Health Canada rules force Licensed producers to comply to very high standards, e.g. fertilizers, pesticides, mold. much safer product than you get on the “street”.
- Concerns with abuse, health effect of smoking, cognitive and physical impairment i.e. “high” creating workplace health & safety hazards
- Rec. low dose and slow controlled administration
- Coping with adverse side effects: Vitamin C, sleep

¹ according to the American Psychiatric Association

² data from Centers for Disease Control

Ways to use it



Smoking is the worst way to use Cannabis: unhealthy, 50% is wasted, bad smell

Vaporizing, edibles (oil, Cannabutter), tinctures, topical creams, lozenges, dermal patches, nasal spray





Medical Marijuana

- College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC)
 - “Authorizing Dried Cannabis for Chronic Pain or Anxiety: Preliminary Guidance”
 - 15 recommendations





Medical Marijuana

- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO)
 - Policy Statement #1-15: Marijuana for Medical Purposes
 - Outline of expectations for physicians when prescribing the use of dried marijuana for medical purposes





Medical Marijuana

- Health Canada
 - Marijuana is not an approved drug
 - Studies supporting safety and efficacy of MM are limited
 - Other alternatives are two approved pharmaceutical drugs:
 - Sativex® (Nabiximols)
 - Cesamet® (Nabilones)





Relevant Legislation

- 2001-2014
 - Marihuana Medical Access Regulations (MMAR)
- 2014-present
 - Marihuana for Medical Purposes Regulations (MMPR)
- 2015 Supreme Court Ruling
 - Users can possess fresh cannabis, oil, extracts etc.
- Health Can. issued exemption to Controlled Substances & Drug Act to allow licensed production of fresh cannabis, oil, extracts etc.



How can MM Impact Workplace

- Ontario Human Rights Code
 - Accommodation for disability
 - Medical documentation
 - Undue hardship
- Occupational Health and Safety Act
 - Impairment & safety risk
 - Sect. 25(2)(h)
- Smoke-Free Ontario Act
 - Tobacco only, not Cannabis





Health and Safety concerns

- Amount of undue hardship caused by safety risk is assessed by considering:
 - Severity of consequences if risk materializes
 - Probability of the risk materializing
 - People exposed to the risk



Does the employee have a disability?

- Request medical documentation
- Respect confidentiality
- Process to safely use & store medical documentation



Does employee have authorization to use MM?

- Request medical documentation i.e. valid prescription & functional/cognitive capabilities of worker
- Procedures to maintain confidentiality

Is the employee in a safety-sensitive position?

Definition:

- incapacity due to drug or alcohol impairment could result in direct and significant risk of injury to the employee, others or the environment.
- considered within the context of the industry, the particular workplace, and an employee's direct involvement in a high-risk operations.
- take into account the role of properly trained supervisors and the checks and balances present in the workplace.

MM Accommodations & Controls

- Conduct risk assessment
- Policies and procedures for MM
- Encourage worker to ask Doctor for non-smoking forms of Cannabis
- Leave of absence
- Assign other types of work (i.e. non-safety sensitive job)
- Fit for Duty policies



Policy Tips MM

- Define terms such as “impairment”, “intoxication” precisely enough to capture MM and other prescription & and non-prescription drugs
- Set acceptable boundaries on use of prescription medication, including protocols for self-reporting
- Communicate willingness to accommodate
- Communicate the disciplinary consequences of policy breaches, including sharing & selling drugs

What should employer do if suspects worker using marijuana in workplace?

- Determine whether use is medical & authorized
- Private meeting
- Approach concern as performance issue
- Raise possibility of providing accommodation, if needed
- Request medical documentation, when appropriate
- Explore accommodation options
- Document meeting and investigation of options fully
- Set a time to meet again to review the employee's performance and accommodation measures

PSHSA Resources



PSHSA.ca

- *Fast Facts* sheets provide concise information on a range of hazards and topics
- Webinars on MM

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MEDICAL MARIJUANA IN THE WORKPLACE

According to Health Canada, the number of Canadians authorized to use medical marijuana is increasing and is expected to reach approximately 1% of the Canadian population by 2024⁵. This PSHSA Fast Fact provides Ontario employers, supervisors and workers with basic information on cannabis, the history of medical marijuana in Canada, applicable legislation, considerations for accommodation and suggested control measures for the workplace.

WHAT IS MEDICAL MARIJUANA? AND IS IT LEGAL?

Medical marijuana refers to cannabis prescribed and used to relieve symptoms and minimize treatment side effects of various medical conditions. Examples of therapeutic uses include managing neuropathic pain in individuals with multiple sclerosis and preventing chemotherapy/radiotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting. Medical marijuana is derived from the leaves and flowering tops of the cannabis plant. The primary compounds within cannabis, called phytocannabinoids, are delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), cannabidiol (CBD) and cannabidiol (CBD)⁴. The properties of THC and CBD have been extensively studied. Evidence suggests that THC, particularly, is responsible for the physical and psychoactive ("high") effects commonly attributed to cannabis use. CBD on the other hand apparently has little if any psychoactive effect⁴. Adverse side effects of cannabis use can include euphoria, anxiety and impairment in short-term memory⁴.

According to the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC), chronic pain and anxiety are the most common reasons for which medical marijuana is requested from treating physicians¹. The CFPC, however, recommends

that family physicians only consider the authorization of dried cannabis for the treatment of neuropathic pain in those patients that have not responded to standard treatments. In addition, dried cannabis is not recommended as an appropriate therapy for anxiety or insomnia. These are among the fifteen recommendations provided for family physicians with regards to prescribing dried cannabis for medical purposes contained within CFPC's document, "Authorizing Dried Cannabis for Chronic Pain or Anxiety: Preliminary Guidance". The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) has also outlined their expectations for physicians when prescribing the use of dried marijuana for medical purposes through their policy statement #1-15¹. These expectations and recommendations are necessary because authorizing a prescription to use medical marijuana now lies solely with the patient's physician.

Health Canada has made it very clear that dried marijuana is not an approved drug⁴ and therefore does not have a drug identification number (DIN). There are, however, two pharmaceutical drugs on the market that have been approved by Health Canada and can be used as alternatives to cannabis. These drugs, Sativex[®] (Nabiximols) and Cesamet[®] (Nabilones), contain a liquid



Q&A





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