Health Clinicians’ Attitudes Toward Cannabis

The majority of medical clinicians and students endorse the use of cannabis as a therapeutic treatment option

- Nationwide survey data compiled by researchers affiliated with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that nearly seven-in-ten practicing medical professionals supported the use of medical cannabis. Those who favored its medical use were most likely to endorse marijuana use for treating pain (73 percent), cancer (72 percent), and nausea (61 percent). Clinician beliefs and practices related to cannabis, Cannabis and Cannabinoid Research, 2021 [https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/10.1089/can.2020.0165]

- Survey data compiled among nursing students in the United States and Israel reported that the “vast majority” of respondents “were in agreement that medical cannabis is associated with significant benefits for physical and mental health.” Attitudes and knowledge about medical cannabis among Israeli and American nursing students, Nurse Education Today, 2021 [https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33571928/]

- Statewide polling data compiled by researchers at the University of Alabama reported that 70 percent of health specialists endorsed the use of medical cannabis when it was authorized by the physician. Lister Hill Center for Public Policy School of Health, University of Alabama at Birmingham, 2021 [https://www.uab.edu/listerhillcenter/publications/briefs-reports/158-medical-cannabis-al-physician-support]

- Statewide polling data of physicians and other medical clinicians in Minnesota reported that the majority of providers (58 percent) agreed that “medical cannabis was a legitimate medical therapy.” BMC Family Practice, A survey of the attitudes, beliefs and knowledge about medical cannabis among primary care providers, 2019 [https://bmcfampract.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12875-019-0906-y]

- Polling data of physicians practicing in either New York City or in the surrounding areas reported that 71 percent of respondents “believed that medical marijuana should be an option available to patients.” New York physicians’ perspectives and knowledge of the state medical marijuana program, Cannabis and Cannabinoid Research, 2018 [https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/pdf/10.1089/can.2017.0046]
● Among pharmacy students surveyed in 2015, the majority (59 percent) “felt that medical marijuana should be legalized in all states.”


A growing percentage of health professionals acknowledge either having issued recommendations for medical cannabis or indicate that they would do so if it were legally permissible

● A CDC survey of medical clinicians in the US reported that over one-quarter of respondents (27 percent) had issued authorizations to their patients to engage in the use of medical cannabis.
Clinician beliefs and practices related to cannabis, Cannabis and Cannabinoid Research, 2021<https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/10.1089/can.2020.0165>

● A survey of nursing students in the United States and in Israel reported that the “vast majority” of respondents (91 percent) would recommend cannabis to their patients if allowed to do so.

Most health care professionals acknowledge never having received any formal training in cannabis science and believe that educational training on cannabis ought to be part of their curriculum

● “While the medical cannabis landscape is developing, medical and allied health students are not properly educated and knowledgeable on this emerging field of clinical care. The findings suggest that the implementation of competencies-based curricula on medical cannabis is essential for medical and allied healthcare trainees to have the appropriate level of knowledge to counsel and educate their patients.”
- “In light of the expanding number of patients who use medical cannabis, this study highlights the importance of incorporating medical cannabis education for nurses in academic and clinical curricula.”

- “Nursing regulatory organizations, in partnership with academic institutions and government agencies, must work toward the development of educational and clinical competencies specific to CTP [cannabis for therapeutic purposes]. Tailored education programs are needed to address the knowledge gaps held by NPs and the clinical barriers they face to including CTP as part of their care.”
  A national needs assessment of Canadian nurse practitioners regarding cannabis for therapeutic purposes, Cannabis and Cannabinoid Research, 2018<https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/full/10.1089/can.2018.0002>

- “Over 75 percent of medical school curriculum deans reported that their graduates are not at all prepared or are only slightly prepared to answer patients’ questions about medical marijuana. … [O]ur study highlights a fundamental and potentially growing mismatch between the legalization of medical marijuana at a state level and the ability of physicians to properly address patients’ questions about medical marijuana or to appropriately prescribe it. … With more states on the cusp of legalizing medical marijuana, we must address this mismatch between policy and physician training so that we can best help our patients obtain the potential benefits and minimize adverse consequences from using medical marijuana.”

- “Students in our study indicated they had received little to no education regarding the use of medical marijuana in the pharmacy curriculum. However, 90% indicated they should receive some formal education.”