

Advisory on Medical Cannabis for Health Care Practitioners

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Medical Cannabis in Canada

Health care practitioners have important roles and responsibilities in the appropriate operation of the medical cannabis system and in preventing its misuse. Health Canada currently regulates medical cannabis, legal in Canada since 2002, under the *Cannabis Act (Canada)* and the *Cannabis Regulations*.

Your Role in Authorizing Access to the Medical Cannabis System

A patient must obtain an authorization from their Health Care Practitioner (HCP) to access legal medical cannabis. The College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC *Practice Standard* on Cannabis for Medical Purposes outlines important requirements for HCPs to follow before authorizing medical cannabis.

Once authorized, patients can choose one of two options to obtain legal medical cannabis.

1. Register with a Licensed Producer to purchase medical cannabis online and have it shipped to their home.
2. Register with Health Canada to grow cannabis for their personal use or to have a designated person grow cannabis on their behalf.

The following additional resources may help you stay current on standards of care for patients accessing medical cannabis:

1. Review *relevant information* from Health Canada and Doctors of BC.
2. Explore the *Cannabis Education Toolkit* for HCPs
3. Participate in professional development courses on cannabis for medical purposes offered by *UBC* and *CCIC*.

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Your role in preventing misuse in the medical cannabis system

- ▶ Unfortunately, the medical cannabis system has also been misused by some people, who have used medical personal and designated production authorizations as a cover for illegal criminal production and sales.
- ▶ Patient privacy protections create a higher bar for police investigations, so medical authorizations are an attractive cover for criminals.
- ▶ Health Canada monitors misuse of the medical cannabis system and flags practitioners who regularly authorize over 25 grams/day for potential future review and follow-up.
- ▶ If you rely on evidence-based standards of care, you are unlikely to be targeted by people seeking to misuse the authorization.

People who self-medicate with cannabis

are more likely to obtain cannabis from illicit sources that may provide unsafe products or misleading advice. Updating your knowledge about cannabis will allow you to better serve your patients and provide appropriate advice about both medical or non-medical use.

Most people using cannabis for medical purposes do not receive authorization from their HCP

