

PRESS RELEASE



London, United Kingdom, 28th June 2021

- Largest survey of UK GP's reveals significant support for medical cannabis.**
- 73% were positive or open-minded about a more active role for GPs within the field of medical cannabis**
 - More education and access to information needed -**
 - Medical Cannabis should be prescribed for chronic cancer pain, palliative care, intractable epilepsy, and spasticity in Multiple Sclerosis**

London, 28th June, 2021, The Primary Care Cannabis Network (PCCN) today released the results of the UK's first insight research into GPs attitudes towards medical cannabis. 1005 GPs were interviewed revealing that significantly 73% were positive or open-minded about a more active role for GPs within the field of medical cannabis, namely for specially trained GPs to be able to facilitate scripts for patients.

UK doctors favoured medical cannabis for use in chronic cancer pain, palliative care, intractable epilepsy, and spasticity in Multiple Sclerosis, all of which (apart from epilepsy) can be managed within primary care. Mood disorders such as anxiety, depression, and PTSD were largely not seen as suitable indications for medical cannabis treatments.

72% of doctors cited their no.1 main concern around cannabis-based treatments was the fact that the majority of the available medicines are unlicensed. Lack of evidence around efficacy also continues to be a problem for UK doctors.

Over half (51%) believe cannabis-based medicine could benefit patients who have exhausted licensed medicines, 27% feel it can offer improved quality of life, 24% believe it can offer multi-symptom management, 22% believe it can offer reduced dependency on other prescribed medications and 13% believe it can offer more patient-led personalised medicine.

“GPs make up the majority of medical cannabis main prescribers in many of the more established legalised medical markets” explained the founder of PCCN, Dr Leon Barron. “They (GPs) can enable patient access to this medicine in Canada, USA, Germany and Australia to name a few countries. In the UK however, GPs have largely been left out of the conversation and we feel it's time to change that,” he added. “There has been a growing groundswell of doctors in the UK willing to learn more about this medicine and support their patients' interests. Cannabis based medicines such as Cannabidiol is a rapidly emerging field of medicine which is only just gaining popularity. It is our duty to be informed and approachable on the subject but further to that doctors now have the opportunity to develop professional skills in an area of personalised medicine which is growing rapidly. We encourage UK GPs to join us at PCCN and to expand our knowledge as we are just at the cusp of a huge growth area in healthcare.”

Patient advocacy group PLEA called for doctors to educate themselves to be able to provide a more open environment to discuss cannabis medicines “GP knowledge is crucial. Having a GP that is non-judgmental, supportive, and open to understanding medical cannabis could lead to the patient discovering a treatment that works for them as I did. I was lucky to have an open-minded GP who referred me to a specialist prescriber - the difference in how I am able to live now after treatment is like night and day. Doctors always ask for evidence but actually, it’s not the academic evidence that convinces them, it’s the living breathing evidence (ie. hearing from the patient themselves) that changes their mind towards the efficacy of medical cannabis.”

Educational resources such as quick online reference content, relevant to their profession was cited as the preferred way to widen their knowledge with 48% of respondents asking for clear and concise summaries of the most up to date evidence-based research on cannabis-based medicines, 46% asking for accredited GP focussed e-learning and 41% choosing quick reference/desktop guidance as their preference.

The abundance of anecdotal evidence and the limited clinical evidence remains a conundrum for medical professionals. As the cannabis plant is composed of over one hundred different bioactive compounds, the study of numerous strains and hundreds of compounds within a strain through the traditional route of RCTs would take years to complete. This has highlighted issues of morals and practicalities, including withholding a treatment that is already known to help patients and the impracticality of comparing the cannabis plant to existing pharmaceutical drugs. Access for UK patients is severely limited. It is estimated that there are approximately at least 1.4+ million people in the UK who are self-medicating through this route.

About the PCCN

- The PCCN is the UK’s largest network of GPs with a professional interest in learning about medical cannabis.
- Provides bespoke GP training in prescribing medical cannabis, educational and peer support, a dedicated members forum, professional development, and industry networking
- Provides comprehensive and GP specific E-learning platform (currently under development).
- Holds strategic partnerships with key organisations within the ecosystem (currently, these include The Medical Cannabis Clinicians Society, Drug Science, Sapphire Institute for Medical Cannabis Education, Conservative Drug Policy Reform Group, CPASS, PLEA, Imperial College Medical Cannabis Working Group and The Society of Cannabis Clinicians).