

PRESS RELEASE

London, 14h June 2021

The Primary Care Cannabis Network calls for more GPs to be educated on medical cannabis, following the release of the first nationwide GP attitudes survey.

The survey was conducted by MedeConnect, a division of [Doctor.net.uk](https://www.doctor.net.uk), an online community for doctors in the UK, and interviewed 1,005 regionally representative GPs in the UK between 8th and 29th Jan 2021 and was commissioned by The Primary Care Cannabis Network (PCCN); a growing group of doctors in the UK with a professional interest in medical cannabis.

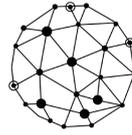
Over 1,000 GP Partners, locums, and salaried GPs were asked about their attitudes towards a variety of areas including the types of medical conditions and areas of access they would be supportive of within this field.

The study revealed over two-thirds of UK GPs (72 %) are either positive or neutral in their belief that medical cannabis holds therapeutic benefits.

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

UK doctors favored 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 round efficacy also continues to be a problem for UK doctors.



PRESS RELEASE

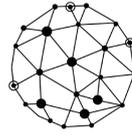
“GPs make up the majority of medical cannabis main prescribers in many of the more established legalized medical markets” explained the founder of PCCN, Dr. Leon Barron. “They (GPs) can enable patient access to this medicine in Canada, USA, Germany, and Australia to name a few countries.

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 are a rapidly emerging field of medicine that is only just gaining popularity. It is our duty to be informed and approachable on the subject but further that doctors now have the opportunity to develop professional skills in an area of personalized medicine that 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.”

74% of GP respondents were either positive or neutral about specialist GP medical cannabis prescribers and 39% supported the idea of specialist GPs (trained in prescribing) facilitating scripts for eligible patients. Nearly ¼ of respondents believed that GP’s should have the ability to prescribe and oversee medical cannabis now.

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.



PRESS RELEASE

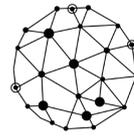
The abundance of anecdotal evidence and the limited clinical evidence remains a conundrum for medical professionals. As the cannabis plant is composed of over one hundred different bioactive compounds, the study of numerous strains and hundreds of compounds within a strain through the traditional route 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.

David Bailey, a PCCN advisor and GP at Susida Medical, a general clinic in Jersey that treats a range of physical and mental health difficulties and addictions with treatments including medicinal cannabis remarked “GPs are in the best position to help identify overlapping chronic illnesses and any deteriorations in the quality of life facing patients who have exhausted all other forms of conventional medicine. By keeping GPs out of this equation we are missing an opportunity to provide our patients with a choice that could lead to a positive outcome. Doctors should be aware of the potential evidence, what is the science or lack of science, what are the risks, benefits and side effects of using medicinal cannabis. Patients must also be aware, it’s not a magic bullet, it’s an alternative treatment that could lead to success.”

Up until recently, how UK GPs feel towards medical cannabis was still a largely unknown area and no study has existed to date that formally assessed GP views around this subject matter.

Julia Piper, PCCN advisor and founder of PrivateGP.com which includes GPs into their medical cannabis prescribing multidisciplinary teams, remarked on the survey “I find it very encouraging that almost 3/4 of the study GPs believe that there are benefits to cannabis-based medicines. It shows that doctors are opening their minds to medical support that is outwith their medical training i.e. that associated with drugs based medicines. Cannabis can be perceived to be more difficult for doctors as they are not trained in its use and are not used to prescribing personalised medicines where the doses and titrations are tailored to the individual, they are much more used to giving dosing of drugs that are tailored to the average. The concept of personalised medical care is much more recognised in integrative medicine; which is something that we need to become more adept at and trained in as doctors, looking after human beings. I genuinely believe that medical cannabis has a place in helping to manage the care of human beings that are suffering, particularly those in pain and where opiates have been one of the only choices. The side effects and difficulties with opiates can be hard to tolerate for patients and they should be given other options.”



PRESS RELEASE

With a gradual rise in public interest in medical cannabis, The Primary Care Cannabis Network has seen this reflected in the membership of GPs interested in medical cannabis and seeking further information. The findings of the survey will help provide baseline data for further research, as well as a more inclusive narrative to the ongoing barriers around patient access in order to inform ongoing policy around access.

About the PCCN:

The PCCN is an independent and growing group of UK general practitioners with a professional interest in the safe prescription of cannabis based medicinal products. We actively work towards a future where every UK general practitioner understands and appreciates the therapeutic value of this medicine and sees it as part of their professional toolkit. The group widens GP knowledge on medical cannabis by providing bespoke GP education as well as updates on the latest industry innovations and international peer to peer support.

Please see below for further information in our Press pack.

If you (or your GP) are interested to learn more please visit:

www.primarycannabisnetwork.com

Follow us on Twitter @primarycannabis + Linked in The Primary Care Cannabis Network

Do you have a question about medical cannabis for the PCCN?

Do not hesitate to get in touch:

info@primarycarecannabisnetwork.com