Cannabis: A Psychoactive Drug
What Clinicians Should Know?

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Disclosure

I have no conflict of interest to disclose.
Legalisation of Cannabis in Canada

- The Cannabis Act – Bill (C-45) June, 2018 set the stage for legalisation of cannabis in Canada on October 17, 2018.
- Legal age: 18 years in Quebec and Alberta.
- 19 + years in other provinces.
- Need a license issued by Health Canada to sell.
- Cannabis - purchased from an approved grower.
- Smoking prohibited in cars, around children and wherever tobacco is not allowed.
- Allowed 30 grams in public.
- Crossing international borders with cannabis is illegal.
Some Common Names of Cannabis

- Marijuana
- Bud
- Blunt
- Chronic
- Dab
- Dope
- Ganja
- Grass
- Green
- Hash
- Herb
- Loud
- Mary Jane
- MJ
- Pot
- Smoke
- Broccoli
- Weed
Cannabis - Marijuana

- Cannabis: Sativa Plant (weed-like plant)
- Marijuana: dry leaves, tops of the plant (commonly smoked)
- More than 400 chemicals in cannabis
- Psychoactive THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol)
- THC alters the brain and gives an individual a high.
- Cannabidiol CBD
- CBD is used for medical purposes
Cannabis

- Medical – To treat illnesses

Or

- Non-Medical – Recreational Use
Some Medical Uses

- Neuropathic Pain
- Palliative Pain
- Spasticity in Multiple Sclerosis (MS)
- Spinal Cord Injury (SCI)
- Chemotherapy-induced Nausea / Vomiting (CINV)

TOPS Guidelines, 2018
Recreational Uses

- Smoking Marijuana is harmful to one’s health
- Alters the mood, feelings and behaviours
- Psychotic symptoms among adolescents
- Affects short-term memory
- Appetite
Cannabis

- Short-term effects
- Long-term effects
Short-term Effects of Cannabis

- Feelings of euphoria
- Confusion
- Impairment
- Slower reaction time
- Anxiety (fearful of being followed)
- Lowered reaction time
- Increased heat rate (risk of heart attack)
- Hallucinations
Some Long-term Effects of Cannabis

- Affects decision making
- Decline in IQ
- Personality
- Achieving one’s goal
- Potential dependency of opiate abuse
Other Forms of Cannabis Usage

Edibles 2019
Eating or drinking cannabis

It can take:
2 hours to feel the effects
4 hours to feel the full effects
12 hours for acute effects to subside
Cannabis is addictive

Avoid:
- Cannabis under the age of 25
- History of substance abuse
- If pregnant or breastfeeding
- Driving after smoking
- Cannabis if you are at risk of psychosis, schizophrenia or addicted to other drugs
- Mixing cannabis with alcohol
Cannabis Poisoning

**Overuse:**

- Cannabis poison
- Not fatal, but dangerous
- Need medical attention
- Hospitalization
- Children and pets at more risk of cannabis poisoning.
Streams of Continuing Care, Clients / Dementia / Cannabis

Supportive Living:
Designated Supportive Living Level 3
Designated Supportive Living Level 4
Designated Supportive Living Level 4 (D)
Long-term Care
The 7As of Dementia

- Anosognosia
- Amnesia
- Agnosia
- Aphasia
- Apraxia
- Apathy
- Altered Perception
7 A’s of Dementia

- Anosognosia: unable to detect that something is wrong.
- Amnesia: The loss of memory.
- Agnosia: A loss of recognition of sensory information and includes all senses – sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell.
- Aphasia: The loss of language, both speaking and understanding others.
- Apraxia: The loss of ability to initiate purposeful movements and patterns of movement.
- Apathy: An individual appears to be depressed or simply uninterested in activities.
- Altered Perception: Misinterpretation of sensory information, which may lead to illusions and/or delusions.
- The overuse of Cannabis in this population could be devastating.
Clinicians Need to Know...

- Know your local policy.
- Roles and responsibilities
- R&R of client, family, pharmacist, physician and service providers.
- How to care plan for a client who is prescribed cannabis.
- Whether the prescribed cannabis is contraindicated with the current treatment plan or now.
- Will the site allow the client to smoke or vaporize dried medical marijuana?
- There may be issues regarding the amount of cannabis in the client’s possession.
Harm Reduction

- Be aware of the potency of products use – Use products with higher CBD to THC ratios – An approved grower.
- Avoid using synthetic cannabinoids (e.g. K2 Spice) – This can be more toxic – Increases the risk of overdose.
- Avoid mixing cannabis with alcohol, tobacco and other drugs – Increase risk of self harm or harming others.
- Don’t use cannabis and drive.
- Get help and Support – Health Link at 811
Staff Education

- Education should be aligned with your local harm reduction policy.
- Each facility should develop a harm reduction policy.
- Education for all clinicians.
- Education should emphasize the impact on the biopsychosocial needs and requirements of clients within a cultural context.
- Education should be developed for patients and families.
Get Help...

- Doctor may prescribe medication, sedative – e.g. Benzodiazepine.
- Observe until symptoms subside.
- Get help – call 911 – Medical emergency.
- For more information on the closest addiction and mental health clinic call: Health Link 811.
- Addiction Helpline: 1866-332-2322 (24/7)
- Mental Health Helpline: 1877-303-2642 (24/7)
- Multi-disciplinary approach.
Evidence

- Cannabis treatment remains a challenge for clinicians.
- Evidence for medical cannabinoids is limited.
- The decisions to use cannabis for medical treatment should be evidence-based.
- Treatment should not be based on anecdotal evidence.
Resources

- AHS, Key Messages, October 17, 2018.