



CANNABIS
CLINIC

www.cannabisclinic.co.nz

Doctors Prescribing Guide Medicinal Cannabis 2019



Dear Dr and colleague,

This is a short and up to date information pack to help you answer your patient's questions.

If you have any feedback or feel unprepared to help your patient in the field of medicinal cannabis, please provide a referral letter back to us. We have a clinic in Auckland and also see patients online through virtual consultations.

We hope you find it useful.

Regards,
Cannabis Clinic



One Page Quick Summary

1. What is medicinal cannabis and is it legal?

Medicinal cannabis is about extracting useful compounds from the Cannabis plant. As a GP, you are allowed to write such prescriptions.

2. I don't believe in medicinal cannabis. Does it work?

Cannabis has shown potential benefit with epilepsy, chronic pain, anxiety, nausea and insomnia. Studies are inconclusive but patient satisfaction rates are high.

Sativex is a combination of CBD and THC and approved in NZ for treating spasticity with MS. The rest are unapproved medications.

3. What are the side effects?

No deaths have been documented from medicinal cannabis. It is non-addictive and does not cause a high.

Somnolence, reduced appetite, diarrhoea, fatigue are the most common side effects (1).

4. What dose should I use?

For chronic pain, a good starting point is 25mg PO OD.

5. I do not wish to prescribe it, what should I do?

Please provide your patient a generic referral letter and request they contact us and we can aid your patient in this journey.



The Cannabis Plant



***Cannabis Sativa* plant
contains chemicals
called cannabinoids**

CBD

THC

Cannabidiol

Does not cause a high

CBD is an FDA approved drug in treating seizures associated with Lennox-Gastaut Syndrome and Dravet Syndrome in patients aged >2 (1)

Tetrahydrocannabinol

Creates the cannabis high

Recreational and medicinal use

Sativex is a combination of THC and CBD and is approved in NZ for the treatment of spasticity associated with MS

(1) https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/drugsatfda_docs/label/2018/210365lbl.pdf

Is Medicinal Cannabis Legal?

The Misuse of Drugs Act (Medicinal Cannabis) Amendment Act has now made medicinal cannabis a legally prescribable by a registered NZ doctor (2,3)

Medicinal cannabis prescriptions may be written without ministerial or specialist approval (there are a few exceptions)

Medicinal cannabis does not need to be prescribed on a controlled drug script

Medicinal cannabis is an unapproved medicine and is therefore under section 29 of The Medicines Act

(2) <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/regulation-health-and-disability-system/medicines-control/medicinal-cannabis/misuse-drugs-medicinal-cannabis-amendment-act>

(3) https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/chair_cabinet_business_committee_medicinal_cannabis_100_day_action.pdf

Benefits of Medicinal Cannabis

Medicinal cannabis has shown anti-epileptic properties and most of the evidence is for this benefit. 2018 saw the first FDA approved product for specific types of epilepsy: Epidiolex. This is not available in NZ.

Medicinal cannabis has demonstrated good evidence of its role in reducing pain and this is the most common indication for use (4)

Medicinal cannabis may also have anxiolytic, anti-inflammatory, neuroprotective, anti-psychotic and anti-tumour properties. These are unproven benefits and are based on preliminary evidence (5)

Medicinal cannabis has many potential benefits but lack of research means definitive statements cannot be made

(4) Cannabinoids for medical use. A systematic review and meta-analysis. Whiting et al, JAMA, 2015; 313(24):2456-2473

(5) Cannabidiol (CBD) critical review report. World Health Organization, expert committee on drug dependence fortieth meeting, Geneva 4-7 June 2018

Dosing of Medicinal Cannabis

There are no definitive guidelines on dosing. Most common practise is to titrate up slowly. We suggest starting at 25mg daily in adults and increasing weekly according to response. Maximum dose is generally accepted to be about 300mg/day, but higher doses have been used, up to 20mg/kg/day (1)

Suggested initial dosing for chronic pain:

		Weight				
		40- 50kg	50 - 70kg	70 - 90kg	100 - 120kg	>120kg
Pain	Mild	5mg	7.5mg	10mg	12.5mg	15mg
	Moderate	10mg	15mg	20mg	25mg	30mg
	Severe	15mg	22.5mg	30mg	37.5mg	45mg

Side Effects

Medicinal cannabis has not caused any documented cases of death due to toxicity

Most common: somnolence, reduced appetite, diarrhoea, fatigue, asthenia, rash, skin infections, transaminase elevation (1)

Medicinal cannabis without THC is not addictive and has no dependence abuse potential (5)

Monitoring & Interactions

Medicinal cannabis is metabolized by CYP450 enzyme. Higher doses of medicinal cannabis along with other CYP enzyme inhibitors (mainly anti epileptics, e.g. sodium valproate) makes it important to check LFT's prior to commencing. Patients with hepatic impairment will need dose adjustment. This is relevant for high dosing only i.e. >200mg/day.

Medicinal cannabis has shown interaction with sodium valproate, carbamazepine, clobazam, diazepam, fluoxetine, phenytoin and St John's wart. Please consult with MIMS



Sample Script

Patient Name
DOB
NHI
Address

Rx -

1ml PO nocte

Quantity

Signed:

Dr M. J Adams

NZMC# 123456

It is generally easiest to hand write the prescriptions

If you are not happy to consult, kindly provide your patient a referral letter and refer back to us

For any referrals, questions or feedback, please
contact us:

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