

# Medicinal Cannabis

## Position Statement

Chronic Pain Australia recognises that access to effective pain management is a human right, and that barriers to access should be removed where it is practical and safe to do so.

Access to Medicinal Cannabis where it is a legal treatment option should be subject to the same regulatory and evidentiary standards as all other medications used in the treatment of pain. Barriers to access such as regulatory burden, stigma, lack of investment in research, and low uptake of opportunities for professional education by health professionals need to be overcome in order to allow medicinal cannabis to take its appropriate place as an option in a multifactorial care plan for a person in pain.

Chronic Pain Australia's position in all considerations of people in pain, is that people should have equitable access to pain management options that work for them, as part of a multifactorial care plan developed between themselves, their coordinating medical practitioner, and their wider care team. Many people in pain report anecdotally that they have experienced benefits using medicinal cannabis in terms of pain reduction and the potential to reduce other medications, allowing for a reduced medication burden and reduced side-effects. Barriers to utilisation of this medicine should be no different than other medicines that have similar evidence and safety profile.

Evidence for the role of medicinal cannabis is growing; despite this, there should be a concerted effort to consolidate this evidence. People who experience pain deserve better than being advised year in, year out, that there is not enough evidence. Researchers and funders should prioritise medicinal cannabis research in order to deliver clarity on the place in therapy for this group of medicines. CPA supports evidence-based interventions, but cannot endorse the status quo of "not enough evidence" as the default reply from stakeholders when determining if medicinal cannabis can be recommended.

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Engagement with primary healthcare providers is critical. Healthcare providers' unwillingness to undertake training or professional development in the use of medicinal cannabis seems to be one of the greatest hurdles for people who may benefit from this therapeutic option for their pain. Chronic Pain Australia calls on medical groups to identify barriers to uptake of practitioner training opportunities. A person who may benefit from the use of any legal & appropriate medicine can experience many barriers - their health care providers should not be one of them.

As with many treatment options available for chronic pain management, price is a significant issue with the potential use of medicinal cannabis. As the evidence for this treatment option is consolidated, health care funders need to assess these medicines for cost-effectiveness (against quality of life, productivity, reduction in cost of other pain management options used) and ensure that people who do find a benefit from the use of these medicines (either as sole pain relief or in reducing overall medicine burden for an individual) are not financially disadvantaged.

Further information about the Medicinal Cannabis legislation and regulation in Australia is available from the Therapeutic Goods Administration:

<https://www.tga.gov.au/medicinal-cannabis>