



Provincial Health Services Authority

ACCESS TO MEDICAL CANNABIS FOR SYMPTOM MANAGEMENT

Summary of Changes

NEW		Previous
BC Cancer	This is a new policy	

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ACCESS TO MEDICAL CANNABIS FOR SYMPTOM CONTROL

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose

This policy provides guidance regarding access to medical cannabis for symptom control for cancer patients at BC Cancer and use within care areas.

The policy aligns care with new legislation, entitled *Access to Cannabis for Medical Purposes Regulations (ACMPR)*, which indicates that individuals with a medical need, and who have the authorization of their prescriber, are able to access cannabis for medical purposes from Health Canada-authorized licensed producers.

There is no human clinical trial evidence that cannabis or any cannabinoids has any useful effect on cancer cell growth. The medicinal role for cannabis and cannabinoids in cancer care is currently only in supportive care.

1.2. Scope

This policy is only applicable to BC Cancer patients and staff regarding medical cannabis.

1.3. Exceptions

This policy does not apply to nabilone or nabiximols, which are Health Canada approved medications. These medications are ordered, dispensed and administered as per standard directives, policies and procedures.

2. Policy

2.1. Policy Statement: All patient care areas

1. As cannabis has not been marketed as a drug (no issued Notice of Compliance by Health Canada), BC Cancer Pharmacy does not purchase, stock or supply the product.
2. If a patient wishes to self-administer their own **non-inhaled** medical cannabis products, it is recommended that they inform their Physician.
3. The patient shall be permitted to self-administer their own **non-inhaled** medical cannabis products at their discretion in their usual place of care.
4. Self-administration of medical cannabis must not impact staff or other patients. Thus the patient is responsible for the security of their own cannabis while in ambulatory settings and to maintain and store within their own belongings

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5. Smoking or vapourization of medical cannabis is not permitted on any BC Cancer premises.
6. Nursing and pharmacy staff shall not be responsible for purchasing medical cannabis for patients.
7. Observed use of medical cannabis can be recorded in the BC Cancer Nursing Notes in the patient's record.

3. Responsibilities and Compliance

3.1. Responsibilities

BC Cancer staff are responsible for knowing the medical cannabis usage mandates at BC Cancer centres, as laid out in this policy.

3.2. Compliance

All BC Cancer staff are required to comply with this policy.

4. Related Documents

1. It is recommended that RNs do not directly administer cannabis to patients at this time, even when they are provided with a valid medical document issued by a physician. [Canadian Nurses Protective Society "Cannabis for medical purposes: Legal implications for nurses" Canadian Nurse (January/February 2017) from <https://cnaaicc.ca/en/canadian%20nurse%20home/articles/issues/2017/january-february-2017/cannabisfor-medical-purposes-legal-implications-for-nurses>]
2. Nurse practitioners in BC are not authorized to prescribe medical cannabis or similar synthetic preparations such as nabilone or nabiximols. See College of Registered Nurses of British Columbia, Scope of Practice for Nurse Practitioners, p. 30 <https://www.crnbc.ca/Standards/Lists/StandardResources/688ScopeforNPs.pdf>
3. The current BC Cancer policy on self-administration of medications for in-patients (H:\EVERYONE\SYSTEMIC\Admin\VCC\Directives\III_Patient Care\III_80_Self Administration of Medications for Inpatients.doc.) will be revised to support this policy. This policy does NOT apply to ambulatory care areas.

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5. Definitions

Cannabis is often referred to as marihuana or marijuana. These terms were historically intended to stigmatize the recreational use of cannabis and are best avoided in a clinical context.

6. References

Additional information on the role of cannabis and cannabinoids in cancer care is available from a March 2016 focused edition of Current Oncology; Vol 23, Supplement 2. This is available for free at <http://www.current-oncology.com/index.php/oncology/issue/view/100>.

7. Appendices

1. Medical Cannabis and Cannabinoids Background Information: provides information on therapeutic role, access, contraindications and other relevant information.

<http://shop.healthcarebc.ca/phsa/BCCancer/Corporate%20Policy/70434.pdf>

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First Issued:	20-APR-2018		
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Posted Date:	25-MAY-2018		
Version:	1.0		
Revision:	Name of Reviser	Description	Date
			DD-MMM-YYYY