

More doctors than consumers favor legalizing medical marijuana: survey

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Cancer and blood specialists most likely to support drug's use for health problems.

(HealthDay)—The legalization of medical marijuana has more support among U.S. doctors than among consumers, a new survey found.

The survey of more than 1,500 doctors and nearly 3,000 [consumers](#) found that 69 percent of doctors said [medical marijuana](#) can help with certain conditions and treatments. Only 52 percent of consumers expressed that same belief.

Among doctors, 67 percent said they believed medical marijuana should be a [treatment option](#) for patients. Half of those doctors in [states](#) where medical marijuana isn't legal said it should be legalized, as did 52 percent of doctors in states considering such laws.

Support for medical marijuana was highest among cancer specialists (oncologists) and blood disorder specialists (hematologists). For those two groups, 82 percent said marijuana can provide real benefits to patients. The same percentage said marijuana should be a treatment option for patients, according to the *WebMD/Medscape* survey.

Among consumers, 50 percent said medical marijuana should be legalized nationwide, including 49 percent of those in states where it is not legal. Forty-five percent said the benefits of medical marijuana outweigh the risks.

Support for legalization of marijuana for recreational use was lower among both doctors (53 percent) and consumers (51 percent), according to the survey, titled *Marijuana on Main Street*.

Currently, more than 10 states are considering bills to legalize medical marijuana.

Peer-review research on the benefits of medical marijuana remains limited, the report noted.

"Despite more than 20 years of anecdotal evidence about the medicinal effects of marijuana, [doctors](#) and consumers remain in search of answers," Dr. Michael Smith, WebMD's chief medical editor, said in a company news release.

"The findings of our consumer-physician survey indicate the medical community's support for the use of marijuana as a treatment option, particularly among clinical specialties that have pioneered research," Smith said.

"Yet these [survey](#) data suggest additional studies will inform decision-makers' confidence in where medical marijuana can help and where it

might not," he added.

The surveys were conducted from late February to early March.

More information: The U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse has more on the [medical use of marijuana](#).

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