

Brazil to study legalization of medical marijuana

December 19 2014, by Renata Brito



Relatives and friends of patients protest for the legalization of cannabidiol, a marijuana derivative that's banned in Brazil, outside the Health Surveillance Agency (ANVISA) in Brasilia, Brazil, Thursday, Dec. 18, 2014. The Brazilian government says it will study next month the possibility of legalizing the use of the marijuana derivative to treat people suffering from severe seizures. (AP Photo/Eraldo Peres)

Brazil will soon look into the possibility of legalizing the use of a marijuana derivative to treat people suffering from severe seizures.

ANVISA, the country's Health Surveillance Agency says in a statement posted on its website that the "reclassification" of marijuana derivative cannabidiol, which is banned in Brazil, will be discussed starting next month.

The statement came Friday, one day after some 40 people protested in Brasilia to demand the legalization of cannabidiol.

Some people resort to a clandestine network of illegal marijuana growers in Rio de Janeiro state that extract cannabidiol and donate it.

It is that network that supplies Margarete de Brito with the cannabidiol she gives her 5 year-old daughter Sofia, who was born with a genetic mutation that causes seizures.

"They won't even let you pay the shipping" she said.

Brito said that since starting treatment with the substance over a year ago her daughter's seizures have decreased dramatically and she stopped taking another medication that left her drowsy.

Earlier this month, the Federal Medical Council that regulates the medical profession in Brazil authorized neurologists and psychiatrists to prescribe cannabidiol to treat epileptic children and teenagers who do not respond to conventional treatment.

Brito, a lawyer and a director of the association that represents medical marijuana users, praised the council's decision but said it should have recommended the national production and medical use of cannabidiol and other marijuana-based substances.

Nelson Nahon, the vice president of the Rio de Janeiro State Medical Council, said there is not enough research or information on cannabidiol

in Brazil to guarantee its safety and effectiveness.

"We must be careful with any new product for any treatment," he said.
"To be approved and commercialized, medication must go through several phases, in-vitro testing and animal testing. Then it must be tested on consenting humans."

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