

Canada should continue with separate medical stream after cannabis is legalized for recreational use

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Cannabis indica. Credit: Wikipedia

After cannabis is legalized, Canada should continue with a separate medical cannabis stream to keep patients safe, argues a commentary in *CMAJ (Canadian Medical Association Journal)*

The Task Force on Cannabis Legalization and Regulation, appointed by the [federal government](#), has also recommended this two-streamed structure.

"Recreational cannabis and [cannabinoid](#)-based drugs (including medical cannabis) are not equivalent," say Elizabeth Cairns and Dr. Melanie Kelly, Department of Pharmacology, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia. "Without a program that supports medical use, patients may lose access to treatments that the Federal Court of Canada has deemed appropriate, which fosters safe and appropriate use."

More research into the effects of [medical cannabis](#) and cannabinoids is needed, but evidence does exist for use with some health conditions.

The authors suggest that a medical stream for cannabis and cannabinoids would reduce risk to patients, provide incentives for research into the therapeutic effects of cannabinoids, and provide educational resources for health care practitioners on the latest advances in cannabinoid research.

"Having a separate medical stream does not mean an endorsement of cannabinoid-based therapeutics as a "cure-all." It is about providing the infrastructure to make informed choices for the patient and health care practitioner, and prioritizing a path to more concrete answers."

More information: *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (2017).
www.cmaj.ca/lookup/doi/10.1503/cmaj.170427

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