

Resident physicians feel unprepared to counsel patients on medical cannabis

October 23 2017

A recent study from Saint Peter's University Hospital in New Brunswick, New Jersey, highlights the need for further education among resident physicians in the use of medical cannabis. It found 38% of resident physicians thought medical marijuana was a prescribed substance, while 78% did not know into what category medical cannabis fell within the Controlled Substance Act. Researchers also found internal medicine residents reported a lack of preparedness for counseling patients regarding medical cannabis. Among resident physicians, there were increased concerns of safety, addiction potential, and limited evidence of therapeutic benefit, which were similar across specialties.

The study assessed the preparedness of resident physicians in terms of health-care competency regarding laws, policies, and medical pharmacology. The study mapped out potential gaps in knowledge regarding the state's cannabis program regulations and evaluated the comfort level in counseling patients receiving these products. The study concluded that physicians self-reported poor understanding of medical cannabis pharmacology and cannabis program registry regulations.

Out of the 51 resident physicians who participated in the web-based questionnaire, overall, physicians-in-training rated poor understating of medical cannabis pharmacology on the Likert scale and self-reported competency was comparable. Internal medicine residents considered themselves to be more competent in comparison to obstetrics and gynecology and pediatric residents combined.

Twenty-eight states in the United States have legally approved medical cannabis use. In total, marijuana sales could expand the national market to twenty one billion dollars by 2020. Health-care professional preparedness has not proportionally evolved with the exponential nationwide increase in medical cannabis use, revealing a potential area of improvement in medical education.

"Lack of awareness and comfort in addressing the therapeutic aspects of [medical cannabis](#) reveals a deficit and an opportunity for continuing medical education," says Dr. Nissy Ann Philip, housestaff at Saint Peter's University Hospital, especially as state laws continue to change.

"Further results from this study will be shared at CHEST Annual Meeting 2017 in Toronto on Wednesday, November 1, 1:30 PM-2:30 PM at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, Exhibit Hall, Poster Number 123. The study abstract can be viewed on the journal *CHEST* website.

More information: Nissy Ann Philip et al, Knowledge and Perception of Medical Cannabis Among Physicians in Training: Are We Prepared?, *Chest* (2017). [DOI: 10.1016/j.chest.2017.08.607](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chest.2017.08.607)

Provided by American College of Chest Physicians

Citation: Resident physicians feel unprepared to counsel patients on medical cannabis (2017, October 23) retrieved 17 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-10-resident-physicians-unprepared-patients-medical.html>

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