

# Clinical trials needed to study cannabinoid use in Canadian children

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Canadian parents use unregulated cannabinoids for seizure control in children with neurologic conditions like epilepsy, and clinical trials are needed to inform doctors and parents on prescribing, according to a commentary in *CMAJ* (*Canadian Medical Association Journal*).

"Without licensed products supported by high-quality evidence, unregulated use of cannabinoids in [children](#) will continue, particularly given the impending legalization of cannabis in Canada and [parents'](#) desperation for effective treatments," write Drs. Lauren Kelly, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, and Anne Junker, British Columbia Children's Hospital, Vancouver, BC.

A national, innovative approach to trialing cannabinoids in children is needed, with collaboration among academics, industry and provincial governments, recruitment of participants by age group, and incorporation of long-term neurodevelopmental follow-up.

Although challenging, [clinical trials](#) should be conducted at multiple sites and involve parent groups.

"Although trials of [cannabinoid](#) treatments in children with neurologic disorders certainly qualify as high-risk research in a vulnerable population, excluding this population from high-quality research may deny these patients access to safe and evidence-based treatments. Physicians, understandably, lack confidence in prescribing cannabinoids and in supporting parents who are self-prescribing cannabinoids, and

require an evidence base to guide them," state the authors.

Strong physician and parental leadership is needed to ensure there is thorough research into the effectiveness of cannabinoids to treat children with neurological disorders.

**More information:** Lauren E. Kelly et al, Considerations for clinical trials to study cannabinoids in Canadian children with neurologic disorders, *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (2018). [DOI: 10.1503/cmaj.180605](https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.180605)

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