

Brazil approves marijuana derivative for medical treatment

14 January 2015, by Adriana Gomez Licon



In this Dec. 18, 2014 file photo, 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. On Wednesday, Jan. 14, 2015, for the first time Brazil approved the use of the marijuana derivative to treat people suffering from epilepsy, multiple sclerosis and schizophrenia among other disorders. (AP Photo/Eraldo Peres, File)

Brazil on Wednesday for the first time approved the use of a marijuana derivative to treat people suffering from severe seizures and other conditions.

Directors of the country's Health Surveillance Agency recognized the therapeutic properties of cannabidiol, saying it is now a "controlled" substance and no longer illegal.

It can now be used to treat epilepsy, multiple sclerosis and schizophrenia among other disorders.

Cannabidiol is not produced in Brazil and the agency said it will draw up legislation permitting it to be imported.

"We had a technical and scientific discussion of a matter that is often influenced by other issues and biases," the agency's president Jaime Oliveira told reporters.

He said cannabidiol does not cause dependency nor psychoactive effects on users.

"It is a great first step but we still need easier and less expensive access to the medication," said Margarete de Brito who gives cannabidiol to her 6-year-old daughter Sofia who was born with a genetic mutation that causes seizures.

Last 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.

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