



Low-THC Medical Cannabis Bills: Leaving Most Patients Behind

Beginning in 2014, several states enacted CBD (cannabidiol)-focused medical cannabis laws, many of which only applied to patients with seizure disorders. Since then, most of the laws have been expanded or replaced with comprehensive medical cannabis laws. Allowing only low-THC cannabis leaves behind the vast majority of those who can benefit from medical cannabis.

Relative Rarity

While cannabis preparations with significant amounts of CBD appear to be particularly effective at treating seizures, many patients' seizure disorders, and other debilitating conditions, respond best to strains with greater proportions of THC than are allowed under low-THC medical cannabis laws. Also, the number of individuals treating seizure disorders through medical cannabis programs is relatively low (0.7% in Utah and 1.6% in Arkansas). It is imperative that these individuals are allowed to legally access medical cannabis — and the strain or product they need. It is just as important, however, to remember that there are countless patients who suffer from a variety of debilitating conditions whose symptoms are alleviated by medical cannabis. The vast majority of those patients have symptoms that benefit from strains of cannabis with more than trace amounts of THC.

THC: Why It Matters

Tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, is just one of the roughly 110 cannabinoids found naturally in cannabis. Clinical trials and the experiences of millions of patients have shown that THC, and strains of cannabis that include THC, provide important medical benefits for individuals suffering from pain, multiple sclerosis, nausea, and wasting. While THC does have psychoactive effects, patients use cannabis for relief, not for euphoria. Patients who inhale cannabis can titrate their dosage precisely to use only as much as they need, reducing or eliminating the euphoria.

Studies have shown that cannabis that includes THC can alleviate a host of debilitating conditions and symptoms, including:

- Pain: The National Academies of Sciences found substantial or conclusive evidence that cannabis alleviates chronic pain. Over 60 million Americans endure chronic pain. With well over 10,000 Americans fatally overdosing on prescription opioids each year, cannabis is a far less risky alternative.
- Nausea and appetite loss: Researchers have found THC and cannabis with THC are effective anti-emetics and appetite stimulants for individuals suffering from the side effects of cancer chemotherapy or AIDS treatments.
- Multiple sclerosis: Research has found that cannabis with THC can alleviate spasticity.

Conclusion

Medical cannabis legislation should not be so restrictive as to leave behind around 98% of the individuals who can benefit from it. As a review by the FDA and Health and Human Services

concluded, cannabis — not just CBD — has currently accepted medical use. Individuals who can benefit from strains and products that include THC should not be left behind.