

Foundation Position Statement: Medical cannabis

Experimental evidence suggests that endocannabinoids, molecules found in the body that closely resemble compounds found in the cannabis (marijuana) plant, may play a role in limiting intestinal inflammation and decreasing intestinal motility. However, there is conflicting evidence regarding changes to the expression of endocannabinoid receptors in patients with inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD). Small studies have reported that a significant proportion of patients with IBD report smoking marijuana to relieve IBD-related symptoms, particularly those patients with a history of abdominal surgery, chronic abdominal pain, and/or a low quality of life index. Additionally, several studies show improvement of quality of life symptoms associated with IBD, including reduced pain, decreased nausea, and improvement in appetite and sleep. However, the medicinal use of cannabis has been previously limited by concerns about an increased risk of cognitive, neuro-muscular, and respiratory side effects, as well as the lack of direct scientific evidence that marijuana or its metabolites decreases intestinal inflammation in IBD patients.

Patients and providers considering the use or recommendation of medical cannabis, CBD or marijuana need to be aware of the unique state laws pertaining to prescribing and use of cannabis. In addition, medical cannabis, and marijuana are still considered controlled substances by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Cannabis and CBD are controlled substances by the Food & Drug Administration (FDA). Further, patients considering the use of medical cannabis should understand their employer's policies related to drug and drug testing prior to working with a physician or licensed provider to obtain and use medical cannabis.

The Crohn's and Colitis Foundation supports policy changes that facilitate the conduct of clinical research and the potential development of cannabinoid-based medications, including further consideration for revising marijuana's status as a federal Schedule I controlled substance.

This statement references *"The role cannabis in the management of inflammatory bowel disease: a review of clinical, scientific and regulatory information by the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation."* (publication March 2019 Inflammatory Bowel Disease Journal) The position statement has been developed by the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation National Scientific Advisory Committee – Government and Industry Affairs Committee with input from the Patient Education Committee, and patient representatives from the IBD Community

Position: Issued May 2018, updated March 2019