



What's all the Fuss About Medical Cannabis?

By: Zelda Therapeutics

Everyone's talking about medical cannabis (or medicinal marijuana) but you're probably wondering, what's the big deal? Is it even legal? Is it just another new health fad?

Well firstly, we believe medical cannabis *is* a big deal and it's here to stay. Pharma companies are investing big dollars in it and governments around the world are moving to legalise its use.

What is medical cannabis?

Medicinal cannabis commonly refers to the use of the cannabis plant (or its extracts called cannabinoids including THC and CBD) to treat a disease or symptom¹. Since 1940, Scientists have discovered multiple health benefits and treatments, which all started from isolating Cannabidiol from hemp oil². Some of these include: Chronic pain, chemotherapy induced

¹ NIH 2015, *Is Marijuana Medicine?*, July 2015, National Institute on Drug Abuse. Available from: www.drugabuse.gov. [22 February 2017].

nausea, multiple sclerosis symptoms, anorexia and weight loss, epilepsy, Tourette Syndrome, anxiety, sleep disorders, Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) other psychoses².

For years, medical cannabis has been given a poor reputation but with research evolving, doctors are seeing clinical evidence that medical cannabis is an effective treatment. As such, we are seeing changing perceptions globally, with doctors, patients and the general community accepting the use of medical cannabis, and in many countries, lobbying for governments to legalise it.

Where is it legal?

In Australia, amendments have been made to the Narcotics Drugs Act 1967 to allow for controlled cultivation of cannabis for medicinal or scientific purposes³. These amendments legalise cannabis for medical purposes only and it isn't available over the counter without a prescription from an authorised specialist medical practitioner¹. Last week the Australian government also gave the green light for approved companies to legally import, store and sell the drug until domestic production meets local needs⁴. This further recognizes the importance of medical cannabis and will provide seriously ill patients with faster access to the medicine⁴.

But Australia isn't the only country to make these changes. As it stands, medical cannabis is legalised in 29 states in the United States⁵ as well as in 13 other countries world-wide such as Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Germany, India, Italy, Macedonia, Philippines, Poland, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, Spain and Turkey⁶.

² National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2017. The health effects of cannabis and cannabinoids: The current state of evidence and recommendations for research. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. doi: 10.17226/24625.

³ SA Health 2016, *Medicinal Cannabis*, 3rd November 2016, Government of South Australia. Available from: www.sahealth.sa.gov.au. [22 February 2017].

⁴The West Australian 2017, *Access to Medical Cannabis gets easier*. Available from: <https://thewest.com.au/politics/access-to-medicinal-cannabis-to-get-easier-ng-s-1679856>. [22 February 2017].

⁵ ProCon 2016, *28 Legal Medical Marijuana States and DC*. Available from: www.medicalmarijuana.procon.org. [22 February 2017].

⁶ Wikipedia 2017, *Legality of cannabis by country*. Available from: www.en.wikipedia.org. [22 February 2017].

With all these countries getting on-board, this number keeps growing and of course the medical cannabis industry has benefitted. It was valued at AU\$250 billion globally in 2016⁷. As more discoveries are made, this figure is only going to increase further.

Pharma companies around the world are announcing they are developing medical cannabis therapies for a number of diseases where medical cannabis or its synthetic versions has been said to work. But to date there has been insufficient or moderate quality clinical evidence for treatment of these disorders; with the exception of chronic pain which has had a number of clinical trials with conclusive evidence recently reported from the American National Academy of Sciences.



What makes Zelda Therapeutics stand out from the pack?

We believe we have significant market advantage and can fast track commercialisation of some of our natural cannabis formulations. We can do this because we have access to over 5-years-worth of patient data, with anecdotal evidence that there have been therapeutic advantages in using our medical cannabis formulations.

Historically, the use of cannabis has been used medicinally for thousands of years in China and India, and now science is catching up, working to prove that plant derived cannabinoids can be just as effective or more effective than current prescribed drugs on the market.

We are doing just that, clinically proving the anecdotal evidence that we've seen in real patients who have used the medicines in the US where it is legal. What's more exciting, is that the disease conditions we are looking at are new uses for medical cannabis, like dermatology (eczema), insomnia and cancer (reducing tumor growth).

As far as we know, we're the first to undertake clinical trials for insomnia using a combination

⁷ International Business Times 2016, *Australia, Canada and other economies are entering the billion-dollar medical cannabis industry*. Available from: <http://www.ibtimes.com.au/australia-canada-other-economies-are-entering-billion-dollar-medical-cannabis-industry-1513961>. [22 February 2017].

of plant derived cannabinoids. In cancer, we have already seen some preliminary evidence in our breast cancer research that our formulations were more potent at reducing tumor growth than pure THC and as potent as the current chemotherapy drugs. Our research into eczema stemmed from anecdotal positive results we've seen from patients who have used the formulations, and now we will undertake clinical trials later this year to clinically prove this, with a relatively short path to market expected.

Medical cannabis is here to stay! We think this is an exciting time, and are very pleased to be working on formulations that will soon provide patients with access to naturally derived medicines to help improve their quality of life.