

# Cannabis, Addictions, and YOU

## A Resource for University of Alberta Resident Physicians

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### Cannabis Legalization...

- Cannabis was legalized in Canada in October 2018.
- Individuals aged 18 years and over can purchase cannabis and cannabis products from licensed stores and only buy or carry 30 grams at a time for personal use.
- Only 4 cannabis plants can be grown per household.
- Smoking cannabis and cannabis products is restricted in some areas.

### Medical Authorization vs Prescription...

- Cannabis is “medically authorized,” not prescribed.
- Only medications that have been assigned a Drug Identification Number (DIN) by the government can be prescribed.
- Cannabis or cannabis products have not been endorsed by Health Canada as pharmaceutical and have not been assigned a DIN.
- Currently, research is in early stages and only shows some benefit of cannabis and cannabis products in limited indications like refractory epilepsy (children) and palliative patients.

### Cannabis Facts...

- Cannabis is the most commonly used psychoactive substance by Canadians between the ages of 15 and 24 years old.
- Cannabis can be harmful to brain development.
- The brain does not stop developing until around age 25.
- Just because cannabis is legalized, rules pertaining to impairment still apply:
- Cannabis causes impairment and driving while impaired is illegal.
- Cannabis cannot be within reach of anyone in a vehicle.
- Physicians can develop addictions, just like members of the general public can.
- It is important that addictions are diagnosed early, and a treatment plan is made and complied with.
- The U of A, AMA, and CPSA have resources available to help and work with residents in supportive, rather than punitive, fashion.

### Cannabis, Addictions and Your Health as a Resident

The importance of physician health is often under-appreciated during residency training and even into independent practice. It is important to remain vigilant about your own health.

If you do develop an addiction, it is also important to seek help and assistance from the support systems outlined below, your family doctor, and if needed, from specialists involved in your care.

### Cannabis Mechanism of Action...

- Cannabis contains Cannabidiol (CBD) and Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC).
- Cannabis acts through endocannabinoid pathway via CB1 and CB2 receptors.
- While the receptors are distributed across many organs in the body, those in the brain impact behaviour the most.

### **Addictive Potential of Cannabis...**

- 1 in 11 people who use cannabis regularly will become addicted to it.
- Cannabis Use Disorder is a clinical diagnosis with significant health and social impacts for the patients.
- Addiction potential of some synthetic cannabinoids (e.g. 'spice') is unknown but can be serious.
- When cannabis is used frequently and heavily on a long-term basis, this impairment can last much longer than 24 hours.

### **Cannabis Use and Addictions in Residents and Occupational Health and Safety Implications ...**

- Cannabis use can impair judgment and decision-making.
- Cannabis can decrease your ability to concentrate (e.g., racing thoughts) and form new memories.
- Impairment from cannabis can last for more than 24 hours, so weekend use is not necessarily safer for return to work Monday.
- Cannabis can increase your risk of developing psychosis.

#### **Bottom Line!**

**Residents impaired from cannabis use are more likely to make medical errors, neglect patient care, and be involved in serious workplace accidents that could cause harm to themselves and others.**

### **How to Get Help:**

#### **The Office of Advocacy & Wellness (OAW)**

<https://www.ualberta.ca/medicine/programs/support-wellness/postgraduate>

CALL: 780-492-3092/780-492-3150

The OAW looks after issues pertaining to the health and well-being of learners. The Office also advocates on their behalf. Learner health and well-being include all areas related to both physical and mental health. It also provides counselling on academic and personal matters.

#### **The Alberta Medical Association (AMA)'s Physician & Family Support Program (PFSP)**

<https://www.albertadoctors.org/services/pfsp>

CALL: 1-877-SOS-4MDS

1-877-767-4637

*CONFIDENTIAL 24 hours a day / 7 days a week / 365 days a year.*

### **This resource was compiled by a Subcommittee of the U of A PGME's Resident Well-Being Committee (RWBC) consisting of:**

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### **For more information on the RWBC see:**

<https://www.ualberta.ca/medicine/programs/supportwellness/postgraduate/committee>