



Medicinal Cannabis Position Statement

1. Purpose

This position statement sets out measures the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) considers should be in place to ensure the safe and accessible use of medicinal cannabis.

2. Definitions

Medicinal cannabis describes a range of cannabis preparations intended for therapeutic use. These include oils, tinctures, flowers and other extracts.¹ Medicinal cannabis generally refers to products that contain tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) or cannabidiol (CBD).

Medicinal cannabis is an **unapproved therapeutic good** intended for exceptional clinical circumstances. Access for authorised prescribers is through the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) limited Special Access Scheme (SAS).²

Authorised prescribers must be approved by the TGA and the relevant state or territory to prescribe an unapproved therapeutic good for a particular condition or category of patient.³

3. Context

Prescribed medicinal cannabis use is now legal in all Australian states and territories.^{4,5}

Medicinal cannabis is most often prescribed for chronic pain, but is also used to treat anxiety, cancer related pain and nausea. Recent statistics indicate that medicinal cannabis is now being used for depression and a range of other illnesses.⁶

The evidence base for the use of medicinal cannabis continues to emerge, however, there is established evidence for its beneficial use in the treatment of epilepsy in paediatric and adult patients, multiple sclerosis, chronic non-cancer pain, and preventing and managing chemotherapy induced nausea and vomiting.⁷

There is also some preliminary research suggesting it may also be useful for treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, sleep disorder, mood disorder, spasticity and motor neurone conditions, and as a substitute for other substances of addiction.⁸

¹ Australian Government Department of Health Therapeutic Goods Administration. *Medicinal cannabis: Access pathways and usage data*. Viewed May 2024. Available at: <https://www.tga.gov.au/access-medicinal-cannabis-products-1>.

² Australian Government Department of Health Therapeutic Goods Administration. Special Access Scheme and Authorised Prescriber Scheme. Viewed May 2024. Available at: <https://sas.tga.gov.au/>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Legislation allowing the controlled cultivation of medicinal cannabis came into effect in October 2016, and the first licenses for controlled cannabis commercial cultivation were issued early 2017.

⁵ Purdue, J. Medicinal Cannabis Seminar, Newcastle, 19 October 2018 Report. New South Wales Nurses and Midwives Association, 2018.

⁶ Australian Government. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare – *Medical Marijuana/Cannabis in the NDSHS. 2022-23*. Viewed May 2024. Available at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/medicines/medical-marijuana-cannabis>

⁷ Australian Government Department of Health Therapeutic Goods Administration. *Guidance for the use of medicinal cannabis in Australia: Overview, 2017*. Viewed May 2024. Available at: <https://www.tga.gov.au/resources/resource/guidance/guidance-use-medicinal-cannabis-australia-overview>

⁸ Purdue, J. Medicinal Cannabis Seminar, Newcastle, 19 October 2018 Report. New South Wales Nurses and Midwives Association, 2018.



Position

It is the position of the ANMF that:

1. The cultivation, manufacture, prescribing, dispensing and administration of medicinal cannabis should be safely and appropriately regulated to ensure:
 - approved medicinal cannabis products are accessible and affordable, and
 - access to medicinal cannabis for evidence-based therapeutic purposes is supported and available where the person, in consultation with their treating health practitioner/s, receives some benefit from, or has their symptoms alleviated by, medicinal cannabis.
2. Nurses and midwives should receive professional development in the legislation in their state or territory which governs the appropriate use of medicinal cannabis for the treatment and management of medical conditions.
3. Nurses and midwives should also receive education on:
 - a. the endocannabinoid system
 - b. the types of products they may encounter when caring for people prescribed medicinal cannabis
 - c. modes of administration for medicinal cannabis
 - d. requirements for storage and management of medicinal cannabis products
 - e. Specific health service policy related to medicinal cannabis.
4. Large scale, high quality clinical trials to examine the benefits and risks of medicinal cannabis use in managing health conditions and symptoms should be conducted to advance the evidence base for the use of medicinal cannabis.

4. Position statement management

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