

NEW POLL REVEALS 1.4 MILLION BRITISH ADULTS USING 'STREET CANNABIS' TO TREAT CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS

Monday 11 November, 2019

Medicinal Cannabis Research Body Welcomes NICE Guidelines But Urges Government to Accelerate Access and Clinical Understanding as Black Market Use Soars

LONDON -- Monday, 11 November 2019 -- The Centre for Medicinal Cannabis (CMC) today welcomes the new NICE guidelines relating to the prescribing of cannabis-based medicinal products for people with intractable nausea and vomiting, chronic pain, spasticity and severe treatment-resistant epilepsy but urges the Government to urgently accelerate patient access and clinical learning via the NHS as it reveals shocking new polling data.

A new poll conducted for the CMC and CPASS by YouGov reveals for the first time the true extent of illicit adult use of 'street cannabis' to treat the symptoms of chronic conditions.

Previous reports have estimated that between 50,000 and 1.1 million people in the UK are already using cannabis in this way, excluding recreational use. However, criticism of this data, open to observational, selection and reporting bias, has prevented their inclusion in national policy deliberations. In our survey we sought to accurately identify the incidence of street-available cannabis use for medical intent amongst the general population in England, Wales and Scotland.

Today we can reveal, from the largest ever polling sample, the incidence of use of street-available cannabis for a diagnosed medical problem amongst the general population is much higher than previously understood and may therefore be closer to 1.4 million users in Britain (2.8% of the adult population).

56% of those using cannabis for their conditions did so on a daily basis, with a further 23% on a weekly basis. 9% spent nothing on cannabis (implying self-grown use), 44% spent up to £99 per month, with a further 21% spending between £100 and £199. Further information regarding which diagnoses cannabis was used for, in addition to which social, age and geographical groups used cannabis in this was collected and will be published in a forthcoming report.

In the coming days, the CMC will set out new proposals for how NICE should evaluate CBMPs in the next 5-10 years whilst we wait for new randomised controlled trial (RCT) data to emerge, host a policy seminar in London to explore how the Danish Government responded to similar challenges and announce the launch of a major new clinical research conference in London.

QUOTES

Steve Moore, Director, Centre for Medicinal Cannabis

"In the medium term cannabis based medicinal products should be evaluated as all other medicines are via the well designed RCTs that are the foundation of evidence-based prescribing protocols but we can no longer ignore the scale of 'street cannabis' use by chronically ill people in the UK. We urge the Government to explore models such as those being implemented by the Danish Government which accelerate patient access and clinical learning and address grim illicit profiteering and exploitation of vulnerable people"

Dr Daniel Couch, Medical Lead, Centre for Medicinal Cannabis

"For the first time we have reliable, representative data regarding the number of people in Britain using cannabis as a medicine. Over a million people are using cannabis illegally to relieve their symptoms. The findings are astounding and present a national challenge. We urgently require robust clinical evidence to evaluate the safety and efficacy of cannabinoid medicines"

Ann Keen Chair of CPASS and Fellow of Queen's Nursing Institute

"These figures demonstrate the vast number of patients in the UK with chronic and debilitating diagnosed conditions who feel they have no choice but to expose themselves to all the risks of accessing

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a medicine that works from the criminal market. Controlled, safe but innovative solutions must be explored as soon as possible”

Notes to Editors

To obtain these data we commissioned a national survey, across all areas of the population in Britain , through YouGov. Participants were asked about their gender, age, social grade, government region, working status and marital status, number of children and use of social media. Respondents were asked if they suffered from a defined list of medical diagnoses. These conditions must have been diagnosed by a medical professional or be secondary to treatment prescribed by a medical professional. Self-diagnosed medical problems were excluded. Patients were then asked if they used cannabis (excluding OTC oils and CBD), to treat the symptoms of this condition or side effects from its treatment, and if so how frequently and how much they spent in the average month on cannabis. Results Across a one-week period in October 2019 10,179 people responded to the national survey. Respondents were representative of the general population. 86% of respondents were from England, 39% were over 55 years, and 57% were from social grades A, B and C1.

The Centre for Medical Cannabis (CMC) is the UK’s first and only industry membership body for stakeholders operating in Cannabis Based Medicinal Products (CBMPs) or cannabidiol (CBD) wellness markets. More information about the CMC can be found at <https://www.thecmcuk.org/>

Patient Advocacy & Support Services (CPASS), is chaired by former Health Minister and Fellow of the Royal College of Nursing and Queens Nursing Institute, Ann Keen and working towards better patient access and care in the regulated medicinal cannabis framework in the UK. More information about CPASS can be found at