# Nurses at Royal College of Nursing and former Health Minister call for justice and equality of care for patients at launch of new cannabis patient advocacy organisation CPASS

**Tuesday 12 November, 2019**

On Tuesday 12th November 2019 a new patient advocacy organisation focused on support and care for patients considering cannabis for medicinal treatment is launching at The Royal College of Nursing. The organisation, the Cannabis 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 RN who is launching a nurses arm to begin working towards better patient access and care in the regulated medicinal cannabis framework in the UK. CPASS are working with condition charity groups and frontline healthcare providers, to help patients with long term conditions.

Medicinal cannabis is being considered by the medical community for conditions such as drug-resistant epilepsy, MS, neuropathic pain and chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting, and many leading researchers have shown indications of broader use beyond these conditions. For all of these chronic conditions, Nurses are at the centre of patient care.

CPASS are calling out to clinical nurse specialist (CNS nurses), offering support and training to be able to deliver best care for patients, in light of the forthcoming NICE guideline announcements on cannabis-based medicinal products. Patients considering medicinal cannabis will be able to ask questions specific to their conditions, and also concerns they may have over how to use CBMPs. CPASS can offer non-judgemental and confidential advice for patients to alleviate concerns over safe consumption and how to use medicinal cannabis.

CPASS chair, Ann Keen RN says; “my values as a Registered Nurse are about having justice and equality of care for all patients. As a former community District Nursing Sister, I am aware that today’s Nurses require education and training to inform and support the patient and family with the best knowledge that we have, with the most up to date understanding of cannabis-based medicinal products.”

Nurses must be at the centre of policy development using their knowledge as Specialist Nurses to be the patients advocate and continue to research, produce evidence as to how we can join with other countries and share knowledge within this innovative pathway to care.”

Interested patients and nurses should subscribe for updates and announcements on forthcoming training day workshops.

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In 2018, the UK Home Office and Department for Health and Social Care took the decision to legalise and regulate cannabis for medicinal use. The Royal College of Nursing has proactively sought to support these changes.

In November 2019, NICE are expected to publish their guideline, however, due to Parliamentary processes, the guidelines may be delayed.

National Institute for Healthcare Excellence (NICE) were commissioned to undertake a year-long review to write the guideline for all cannabis-based medicinal products in the UK.

Dr Derek Tracy, FRCPSYCH, Consultant Psychiatrist and clinical director, OXLEAS NHS Foundation Trusts, Kings College London and Advisory Board Member to CPASS says; "We all want the same goal, but we end up disagreeing how to get there. Nurses, like doctors, may have anxieties about getting in trouble and doing the wrong thing and to do no harm but also wanting to help people. We have to understand everyone's instinctive critical anxieties and ask how to work together, instead of being an us versus them."

Dr Lina Eliasson, PhD, CPsychol, Advisory Board Member to CPASS and Founding Director to Sprout Behaviour Change says; “I salute the Royal College of Nursing for taking the lead amongst professional healthcare bodies to support medical cannabis reform in the UK. This will clear the path for evidence-based training and information for nurses to enable confident and informed conversations with individuals who can benefit from these products. I hope other medical Royal Colleges and Faculties follow suit to ensure that all healthcare professionals are appropriately informed. This would reduce the stigma still attached to using cannabis-based medical products as well as facilitate the implementation of safe and effective processes for prescription and supply of medical cannabis to those in need”.

ENDS

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