Medical Marijuana: Politics Meets Regulation

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Promoting Regulatory Excellence

Colorado Background

- State Constitutional Change
- Designed to benefit persons suffering from a debilitating medical condition
- Regulatory Environment
  - MMJ Patient Registry
  - MMJ Vendors, Retailers & Caregivers
  - Physicians

Social & Political Environment

- Change in Federal Stance on MMJ
- Legislative Bills & Hearings
- Medical Marijuana Advocates & Activities
- Law Enforcement Experiences
Health Care

- Single payor
- First dollar coverage
- 91% hospital services publicly funded
- 99% physician services publicly funded
- Fewer physicians per population
- 99% of physicians belong to one mutual defense organization

Licensing and regulation

- Provincial Colleges or territorial government
- Colleges have delegated authority
- No DEA, colleges have oversight of doctors prescribing practices
Federal versus Provincial Responsibilities

- Health Canada: drug scheduling
- Criminal law is a federal responsibility
- Medical marijuana: regulation under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act

Medical Marijuana

- Ontario Court of Appeal 2000
- Violation of Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- Gravely ill patients denied access to symptom relief

Medical Marijuana Access Regulations

- Made possession of small amounts of marijuana legal if for medical purposes
- Patients could also grow their own or have someone grow it for them
- Access limited to patients suffering from grave and debilitating illness for whom conventional therapy failed
- Patients needed physician to submit forms to Health Canada
- Physician confirmed diagnosis, need and dose
More Court Rulings

- Unconstitutional to not supply marijuana
- "Prairie Plant Systems Incorporated"

Relaxed Physician Obligations

- Provide diagnosis, no longer provide dose

Headlines!

- Medical marijuana: Just because William Breathes got his card doesn't mean all's right with registry
- The state will need a pot of money to maintain the medical marijuana
- Medical marijuana hearing sets Med. marijuana: 3,000 patients on the rise
- Medical marijuana registry numbers on the rise, again
- Medical marijuana 420 party—again
- Medical marijuana community fights health department's PTSD policy
Statistical Data from the MMJ Registry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th># of Patients</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chachexia</td>
<td>1,201</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cancer</td>
<td>2,553</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Glaucoma</td>
<td>1,022</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<td>Muscle Spasms</td>
<td>17,035</td>
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<td>Seizures</td>
<td>1,668</td>
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<td>Severe Pain</td>
<td>92,704</td>
<td>94%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Severe Nausea</td>
<td>11,471</td>
<td>12%</td>
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Active Registry Cards 2009-2012

Working with Board to Manage Reactions

- It’s not evidenced based!
- This isn’t right!
- Not in my practice!
- But we’ll look stupid if we don’t do anything!
- I want to make a stand!
- We’re not equipped to fight the proliferation of MMJ!
It’s all about the medicine.

• Should someone seeking medical marijuana receive substandard medical treatment?
• Focus on the medicine and safety to practice

Complaints Received by the Colorado Medical Board

• Inappropriate MMJ Certifications
• Physician Using MMJ

Current Concerns

• HC has difficulty growing enough marijuana
• Compassions clubs operate under radar to provide supply
• 15,000 licensed growers, never inspected by HC
Current Reality

- Regulation was intended to authorize access for a small number of patients
- Demand has exceeded supply
- 2005 - 805 patients
- 2011 - 12,264 patients
- Ontario court judgment: estimate 400,000 users of "medical marijuana"

Parallels with Medical Alcohol

- Lawful possession and use of alcohol during prohibition

BC Bud

- High potent marijuana grown in BC
- 6 billion dollar illegal industry, 95% exported to USA
- Majority operated by gangs
- 20,000 homes growing it
Regulatory Enforcement Issues Specific to MMJ

- Safety to Practice
- Identifying Experts
- Complainants vs. Patients
- Witnesses
- Investigative Intense

Enforcement Issues Continued

- Grand Standing
- Legal Service Resources

Regulatory Experience

- Physicians remain reluctant gatekeepers
- HC limited resources to scrutinize use
- Very few complaints to regulators
- High societal tolerance of recreational use
- Serious concerns with criminal supply/distribution
HC Proposed Regulations

- Essentially remove HC from any enforcement or oversight
- Physicians become authorizing agent
- HC no longer does supply and distribution

FMRAC’s Position on Amendments

- Maintain status quo, or
- Treat it like a pharmaceutical, schedule it and supply is through pharmacies, or
- Decriminalise it

FMRAC’s Position on Medical Marijuana

- The practice of medicine should be evidence based
- Physicians should not be asked to prescribe or dispense substances or treatment for which there is little evidence of efficacy or safety
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