



College of Licensed Practical
Nurses of Manitoba



College of
Registered Nurses
of Manitoba



THE COLLEGE OF
REGISTERED PSYCHIATRIC NURSES of MANITOBA

Medical Cannabis: Guidelines for Manitoba Nurses (2018)

Purpose

**In this document, the word nurse refers to licensed practical nurses (LPNs), registered nurses (RNs) and registered psychiatric nurses (RPNs).*

Nurses must recognize they do have a role when working with clients who use cannabis for medical purposes.

The purpose of this document is to set out the legal framework and to help nurses interpret the federal regulations as they apply to practice in Manitoba. Professional nursing practice standards, practice expectations and codes of ethics for each of the three nursing professions in Manitoba underpin the guidance provided within this document. All nurses are required to practise within their own level of competence, in accordance with their education, training and professional scope of practice.

The administration of cannabis for medical purposes is an emerging trend in health care. Therefore, this document contains information that is known and available to the three nursing regulators at the time of publication. As this health care trend continues to evolve and more becomes known about this practice, the nursing regulators will continue to communicate additional guidance to Manitoba's nurses.

Legal Framework

In nursing, two sets of regulations under the [Controlled Drugs and Substances Act](#) must be considered before administering cannabis for medical purposes:

- [Narcotic Control Regulations \(NCR\)](#)
- [Access to Cannabis for Medical Purposes Regulations \(ACMPR\)](#)

Employees, such as nurses, may administer cannabis to a client who is under treatment as an in-patient or out-patient in hospital or a personal care home as long as the following criteria are met:

- Authorization from administration of the hospital or personal care home such as having a policy to support the practice
- The client has a valid medical document to authorize access to medical cannabis, and
- Medical cannabis is obtained by a licenced producer

Limitations to the Nurse's Role

It's important for nurses and employers to understand the limits and conditions of the administration of cannabis for medical purposes:

- All nurses, regardless of the setting, may assist with clients' self-administration of medical cannabis.
- Nurses may administer medical cannabis to clients within hospital settings and personal care homes, provided organizational policies are in place that supports administration of medical cannabis.
- Nurses are advised not to administer medical cannabis in any other setting.
- Only physicians are authorized to provide a medical document which allows clients to access medical cannabis and physicians are authorized to administer medical cannabis regardless of the setting.

While nurses are not currently authorized to administer medical cannabis without a related employer policy (in a hospital or personal care home setting), it is still important they continue to care for clients who use cannabis.

Nurses' Role in Settings Outside of Hospital or Personal Care Homes

Clients who receive medical authorization may possess certain amounts of cannabis for their medical use. Nurses are *not authorized to directly administer* medically authorized cannabis outside of a hospital or personal care home setting because there is no such direct statement that supports this in the regulations. However, nurses may offer assistance to the client when the client is self-administering medically authorized cannabis.

The nurse can support the client in self-administration of medically authorized cannabis and discuss what the client may or may not be able to accomplish on their own. Nurses should be mindful to problem-solve as best they can in these situations and allow the client the ability to do it on their own and exercise their choices as to how to administer cannabis for medical purposes.

Some examples of how a nurse can assist a client may include:

- Opening the bottle or packaging for self-administration;
- Reading labels and checking the time at the request of the person who is self-administering; and
- Providing food or fluids to allow the client to self-administer.

Nurses' Role in Hospitals or Personal Care Homes

The NCR must be taken into consideration for nurses who practise in hospitals or personal care homes. The hospital or personal care home must have policies that are in line with the ACMPR and the NCR that provide guidance and support for nurses before they may be authorized to administer medical cannabis. If the hospital or personal care home administration does not have a policy permitting nurses to administer cannabis, the role of the nurse will be similar to that of a nurse outside a hospital setting above. The nurse should seek to know, understand and follow the policy set by the hospital or personal care home, as long as its policies fall within the legislation.

Before administering medically authorized cannabis to a client, the nurse must confirm necessary organizational policies are in place and that the client has agreed to using it. This is achieved by reviewing the client's health record, the medical authorization for use of cannabis, the label or equivalent document issued by a licensed producer, and the client's identity.

If the nurse has any concerns about the validity of the client's authorizing documentation, cannabis products or organizational policies, the nurse should not administer the product. Here, the nurse should report their concerns directly to the physician and/or the employer as appropriate.

Every Nurse's Role

Regardless of nurses' personal stance on cannabis use, they must continue to engage in discussions and be open to having these conversations with their clients. It is the responsibility of all nurses to be well-informed, ask questions and consult with their employer and/or regulatory nursing authority when they are unsure of what to do. Employers are encouraged to develop supportive policies that provide guidance for nurses around administering cannabis.

Nurses are expected to have the necessary knowledge, skill and judgment to assist with the administration of medical cannabis while also:

- Evaluating the impact of cannabis;
- Providing a thorough nursing assessment;
- Having discussions around prescribed and illicit drug use;
- Identifying, managing and appropriately communicating potential adverse reactions;
- Accurately documenting assessments, interventions, and outcomes related to cannabis use;
- Educating and counseling clients to support independence and informed autonomous decision-making; and
- Storing, transporting and disposing cannabis products in accordance with regulation and appropriate organizational policies.

Whether a client's cannabis use is medically authorized or not, nurses must use this information to inform the nursing process and use their knowledge, skill and judgment during nursing care delivery. It's also expected that nurses understand and practise according to federal and provincial regulations, applicable professional regulatory standards, practice directions, guidelines and organizational policies related to all aspects of cannabis for medical purposes.

With cannabis legislation changing, nurses are expected to be informed of the potential impact to their practice.

Definitions

Cannabis: Any raw preparation of the leaves or flowers from the plant genus cannabis. Cannabis includes cannabinoids but does not include approved pharmaceuticals that contain derivatives of or are synthesized from the cannabis plant.

Marijuana: A nickname for cannabis from Mexican origin. The term marijuana is often used in reference as a recreational drug.

Resources

Canadian Nurses Protective Society (CNPS) www.cnps.ca

Care Inspectorate (2015). [Prompting, assisting and administration of medication in a care setting: guidance for professionals.](#)

Government of Canada (2016). [Access to Cannabis for Medical Purposes Regulations SOR/2016-230.](#)

Government of Canada (1996). [Controlled Drugs and Substances Act S.C. 1996, c. 19.](#)

Government of Canada (2017). [Narcotic Control Regulations C.R.C., c. 1041.](#)

Government of Manitoba (2015) [Health Services Insurance Act C.C.S.M. c. H35.](#)

Health Canada (2013). [Information for health care professionals: Cannabis \(marihuana, marijuana\) and the cannabinoids.](#)

Contact Information

If you have questions, you can contact a practice consultant at one of Manitoba's nursing colleges:

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