

Over-the-counter medicinal cannabis a step toward better pain management

16 December 2020

Painaustralia has welcomed the announcement by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) to down-schedule cannabidiol (CBD) and enable the availability of low-dose CBD over-the-counter (OTC) in pharmacies.

CEO of Painaustralia, Carol Bennett, said changes that provide more accessible and affordable pain management options are necessary. “While the number of people living with pain in Australia rises, there will still be significant gaps in access to, and understanding of, best practice holistic pain management. With the recent restrictions applied to opioids in Australia making pharmacological pain treatments less accessible, the schedule 3 listing of CBD and ready availability in pharmacies will add another drug to the list of available treatments. The major missing piece of the puzzle remains access to effective multidisciplinary treatment, but this move to make low dose medicinal cannabis available over the counter is a welcome increase in options available to people experiencing pain.”

The majority of people who seek medicinal cannabis do so for pain management, and there is growing interest and expectation around the use of these products to treat a range of conditions.

Chronic pain can be debilitating and have adverse effects on work, sleep and relationships. People with chronic pain also commonly experience comorbidities such as depression, sleep disturbance and fatigue. The most effective treatments tend to involve multi-disciplinary care.

“Painaustralia supports current efforts to enable quicker access to medicinal cannabis where it has been correctly prescribed,” said Ms Bennett.

Painaustralia is advocating for the adoption of the [National Action Plan](#) for pain management (currently with State and Territory health ministers for endorsement) to ensure a national and holistic policy framework that supports consumers, health professionals and the wider community.

Chair of Painaustralia’s Consumer Advisory Group, Sr Mary-Lynne Cochrane, said that low-dose CBD provides another option for the pain toolkit: “When it comes to chronic pain, there is a need to expand availability of safe and effective treatments as current treatments are not adequate. It won’t be a silver bullet or suitable for all people experiencing chronic pain, but it does expand the range of options that might work for some people,” Sr Cochrane said.

“Steps need to be taken to promote quality use of CBD and all cannabis-derived products given the potential for increased use and greater accessibility. Increasing understanding of pain management and the importance of multi-disciplinary care should also be part of promoting more accessible use of CBD and other medicinal cannabis products.”, Ms Bennett concluded.

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About Painaustralia

Painaustralia is Australia’s peak national pain advocacy body working to improve the quality of life of people living with pain, their families and carers, and to minimise the social and economic burden of pain on individuals and the community.

Media enquiries

Tara Corcoran at Painaustralia: 0492 817 240 or media@painaustralia.org.au