

# MEDICAL CANNABINOIDS

Summary of the Clinical Practice Guideline | January 2018

## Medical Cannabinoids Prescribing Algorithm

If Considering Medical Cannabinoids

YES

For: Neuropathic Pain, Palliative Pain, Spasticity in Multiple Sclerosis (MS) or Spinal Cord Injury (SCI), Chemotherapy-induced Nausea/Vomiting (CINV)

Recommend Against Use

NO

NO

YES

If tried: ≥3 medications for neuropathic pain or ≥2 medications for palliative pain; or if refractory to standard therapies for CINV or spasticity in MS or SCI

VFS

May consider a medical cannabinoid as adjunctive therapy:

Neuropathic or Palliative Pain: Try nabilone or nabiximols Chemotherapyinduced Nausea/Vomiting: Try nabilone Spasticity in MS or SCI:
Try nabilone or nabiximols

We recommend against prescribing medical marijuana (particularly smoked) as a first-line cannabinoid due to a high risk of bias in available studies and unknown long-term consequences.

In all cases, potential harms and benefits should be discussed with the patient.

### Percentage of people experiencing harms

Type of harm	Cannabinoids	Placebo
Sedation	50%	30%
"Feeling high"	35%	3%
Dizziness	32%	11%
Speech disorders	32%	7%
Ataxia/Muscle twitching	30%	11%
Hypotension	25%	11%
Numbness	21%	4%
Psychiatric	17%	5%
Euphoria	15%	2%
Dysphoria	13%	0.3%
Impaired memory	11%	2%
Withdraw due to harms	11%	~3%
Dissociation/Acute psychosis	5%	0%

### Percentage of people experiencing benefits

Benefits	Cannabinoids	Placebo	
Chronic Pain (≥30% reduction after 4 weeks)			
Neuropathic pain	38%	30%	
Palliative pain	30%	23%	
Chemotherapy-induced nausea/vomiting (in 1 day)			
Control of nausea & vomiting	47%	13%	
Spasticity (≥30% improvement after 6 weeks)			
Spasticity	35%	25%	

### Daily doses and costs

Drug	Daily Dose <sup>2</sup>	Approximate cost/month
Nabilone*1	2 to 6 mg	\$94 to \$305
Nabiximols*	4 to 12 sprays	\$226 to \$903
Medical Marijuana Dried	1 to 3 g typical use	\$250 to \$750 Based on \$8.37/g

<sup>\*</sup>Manufacturer list price, does not reflect pharmacy dispensing fees.

Only generic nabilone covered by most provincial drug plans.









<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Studied doses: Nabilone 0.5mg to 8mg/day, nabiximols 4 to 48 sprays/day, smoked marijuana had THC concentrations ranging 1 to 8% up to three times a day as tolerated. Daily doses from drug monographs and Health Canada.



### Neuropathic Pain: Pharmacotherapy Treatment

## Outcome: Meaningful (~30%) Pain Improvement

Ordered by decreasing estimated efficacy

Limitations

1. Based on indirect

comparisons.

2. Timeframe ~4 to

3. Details on methods

available in online supplement.

12 weeks.

#### Amitriptyline High Dose Opioids 25 Improve **◎◎◎◎◎◎◎◎◎◎◎ 18** Improve 0000000000 with treatment with treatment 900000000 **9000**000000 --------25 Improve 25 Improve 000000000 with placebo or no with placebo or no treatment treatment 50 No improvement No improvement 9000000000 \*60-110mg oral morphine per day Venlafaxine Pregabalin 0000000000 000000000 17 Improve 16 Improve <del>00000000</del> **----**with treatment with treatment -----9999999999 25 Improve 25 Improve with placebo or no with placebo or no treatment 59 58 No improvement No improvement Gabapentin Duloxetine 15 Improve with treatmen 0000000000 13 Improve **000**00000000 with treatment with treatment -----•••••• -----25 Improve 25 Improve with placebo or no with placebo or no treatment treatment No improvement No improvement Cannabinoids 0000000000 Improve ----with treatment with treatment \_\_\_\_ 25 Improve Improve with placebo or no with placebo or no treatment treatment No improvement No improvement