

Cross-Party Group on Medical Cannabis AGM

Date and Time

23rd September 2023 @6pm

Minute

Present

MSPs

- Tess White MSP
- Oliver Mundell MSP (online)

Invited guests

- Professor David Nutt
- Kyle Esplin
- Will Ewart
- Kirsty Morrison (Cancard)

Non-MSP Group Members

In person

- Linda Hendry
- Andrew Lundy (patient subgroup)
- Claire Bwelec (patient subgroup)
- Anna Ross (University of Edinburgh - secretary)
- James Smith (Cannabis Industry Council)
- Karen Gray (parent)
- Jan Alexander (industry)

Online

- Carol Dew (patient subgroup)
- Marc Landers (patient subgroup_)
- David Johnstone (patient subgroup)
- Hamish Clegg (Industry)

Apologies

Pauline McNeil MSP

Agenda Item 1

Update on children with epilepsy

- Following Lisa and Cole story – Cole has been taken off Phenytoin
- Karen and Murray – taken case to ombudsman – reduction in seizures but facing supply issues of medicinal cannabis

Agenda item 2

Policing

- Spoken to young man who has been strip searched twice while in possession of prescribed medicinal cannabis – had blood taken and spent a night in the cells
- Another 71-year-old man – had his car stolen and the men who took it drove it into his property – when the police came, they discovered the man's cannabis supply growing in his garden and arrested and held him in a cell – they even took his trousers as they claimed he was a suicide risk – shows police are aware they are inflicting trauma
- Over half of minor offences are cannabis related
- Lord Advocate starting to acknowledge nuances in the law

Agenda item 3

Presentations

Professor David Nutt

- Establishing state of play – medicinal cannabis in the UK
- Disappointing that prescription is not yet available on the Scottish NHS
- Worked with patients with chronic pain, anxiety/trauma related pain, sleep disorders
- In one cohort, nearly half of patients have been able to stop taking opioids
- PTSD and depression also being studied
- Published a paper in leading pharmaceutical journal – used Roland's annual lecture to the Royal College of Physicians which argued for new ways of evaluating evidence as basis – utilised cannabis with a sample of children with epilepsy - found 96 percent chance of responding
- Provides real world evidence, which is often claimed to be lacking
- In process of setting up a legal challenge

- NICE guidelines are backwards
- Possibility to isolate out Scottish figures to prove case?

Agenda item 4

Patient Access

Andrew Lundy

- Been asking police in the street if they are aware of the laws around medicinal cannabis possession – and also around driving
- Found less than 50 percent know what the legal limit is
- Threat of losing licence
- Must stop the strip searching of children with a legal prescription

Kyle Esplin (online)

- No different to other controlled medications
- But other drugs / medicines do not have roadside testing issues
- Must separate two issues for police
- Scotland has autonomy of drink driving laws
- From online – has anyone considered a freedom of information request to find out police position / training providing on this matter?

Hilltop Leaf – Will / Hamish (online)

- First cannabis farm in Scotland
- 2 clients currently
- 5 different suppliers
- Over 1000 patients in the UK
- 10 staff
- Working to bring out a branded product
- Want to achieve seamless access
- Continuity of supply
- Ronnie Cowan – what is your relationship with the Home Office? – Good
- Not currently supplied in pellet form – not at that stage yet
- Prescription sent to Hilltop then they send out to patients
- Kynd – Jas Noughty – cannabis café and dispensary in Edinburgh
- Pharmacies – more work in this area?
- Sapphire Clinic Edinburgh

Cancard Initiative

- A Cancard™ is a medical ID card, recognised by the police. It is a validated indication to any third-party that you are consuming cannabis for medical reasons
- James Smith
- Co-chair of the Prescription Cannabis sub-committee of the Cannabis Industry Council (CIC)
- Currently building campaign to allow GPs to initiate prescriptions
- Will soon be circulating a letter to gain signatures and support to lobby government

CIC (Cannabis Industry Council)

- Elisabetta Faenza (online)
- Legal opinions
- 2 notable papers
- Rights of medicinal patients in the workplace
- Paper on driving – addresses misconceptions

Health

- Shared care arrangements
- Private consultant cannot currently make a prescription that a GP can takeover – but can with other medications
- Multiple layered approach
- NICE guidelines do not apply in Scotland – no legal standing
- Must explore tension in shared care
- Work with SIGN (Scottish intercollegiate guidelines network)

Claire Bwelec

- Focus on workplace
- Pre-employment drug testing
- Some workplaces failing to distinguish between medicinal and recreational use
- Causing many fear and uncertainty
- Impairment of cognitive function
- Subject to frequent monitoring – if able to work with opioid medication, why are they being judged for using medicinal cannabis?
- Opening an inbox for people to share their experiences in work
- Broader research effort
- Wider discussion with Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)
- Heavy handed approach from HR professionals

- Only legal to vape it
- John (online) from patient subgroup – been put on suspension from his work for use of his medicinal prescription
- Felt he was unable to work
- Suffers from IBD and an auto-immune disease
- Used it at work – and was escorted out from the building and no pay for a week – then placed on suspension
- Story is echoed
- “Canwork” initiative in England - Cancard
- Cancard help police identify users of medicinal cannabis
- Can unions help? – Claire is a trade unionist and is trying to raise this issue

AGENDA ITEM 5

Planning ahead

- Foster body of work – 3 sessions:
- Policing – police training / freedom of information
- Shared care and guidance
- Employment and HR practices
- Potential debate in parliament – shared care – devolved matter – towards end of session
- Make Tess White member of the CPG
- SNP and Green member for the CPG