



AMERICAN HERBAL PHARMACOPOEIA®

***Cannabis* Monograph Q&A**

In 2011, the American Herbal Pharmacopoeia (AHP) began the development of a Monograph and Therapeutic Compendium for *Cannabis*. The initiative began in part due to the increasing State by State acceptance of *Cannabis* for medicinal purposes and the need for quality standards to be applied to this material and partly in recognition that *Cannabis* is widely used for medicinal purposes, which suggests the need for accurate information regarding appropriate use and safety.

What is the overall mission of AHP?

Since 1995, AHP has been developing standards of identity, purity, quality, and therapeutic and safety reviews for botanical ingredients. The overall goal of AHP is to promote the quality, safety, and integrity of herbal medicine.

What is the purpose of the *Cannabis* monograph?

The primary focus of all monographs is to provide testing standards that provide scientifically valid ways for ensuring the identity, purity, potency, and quality of botanical raw materials.

What type of tests will the AHP monograph contain?

Every monograph contains a suite of identification and quality tests including botanical, macroscopic, microscopic, and chemical characterizations. Specific chemical tests will include thin layer chromatography, which can be used for identification purposes; and high performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) and gas chromatography (GC) used to quantify key cannabinoids. Additionally, the monograph will include guidance regarding pesticides, metals, and microbial limits and testing.

What is the primary purpose of having multiple methods of analysis?

Multiple methods allow for a variety of stakeholders to employ scientifically valid techniques from ensuring identity, purity, and quality whether in the field, dispensary, a patient, product manufacturer, or regulator. Also, different techniques assess different things and so a multiple of tests is always better than simply employing one.

What makes the analytical methods included in the AHP monograph scientifically valid compared to other methods?

The selection of tests included are formal tests included in every pharmacopoeia (compendium of drug products) worldwide. The chemical tests included have been in use for more than 30 years. One set of tests comes from the peer-reviewed scientific literature and was used as part of the formal drug enforcement agency (DEA) program for testing *Cannabis* samples; another test is used as part of a United Nations program for drug evaluation.

Will these be considered to be the “best” methods for analysis of *Cannabis*?

There is never one technique or method that is best for all things all the time and technology is always changing. What is most important is to establish methodologies that give reproducible and consistent results, which these methods do. The monograph will establish a scientifically valid baseline of accurate reporting of analytical results. Thereafter, other methods can be compared against the AHP method.



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Why is it important to establish one set of methods as the benchmark for analysis?

Currently in the *Cannabis* analytical world, different analysts are using different technologies and methods and reporting their results, such as quantitation of THC, in different ways that are often not scientifically valid. They then use those analytical results to claim some level of superiority, such as higher THC values, which dispensaries and patients or product manufacturers use to influence buying decisions. However, every technology and method gives different results so the values being reported are not consistent and so buying choices are often made on inaccurate information. Adherence to a monograph standard ensures that results are consistent and findings are accurate.

What is the AHP *Therapeutic Compendium*?

The *Therapeutic Compendium* is a comprehensive review of the totality of the available medical literature for *Cannabis*. It includes historical and traditional herbal medicine experience along with a review of modern scientific literature encompassing indications, contraindications, side effects, dosing, preparations, safety, use in pregnancy, and interactions with conventional medications.

How is the AHP *Therapeutic Compendium* different from the plethora of already existing *Cannabis* information?

Most popular information is generated from inaccurate or imprecise extrapolations of the benefit or potential benefit of *Cannabis* as reflected in pharmacological research. Much of this research is exploratory and may not have any relevance to human clinical use. Additionally, reporting biases heavily influence many sources of information, popular and scientific. Pro-*Cannabis* reporting often exaggerate the potential benefits of the botanical, while anti-*Cannabis* reporting will often negate any potential benefit. The truth is usually somewhere in the middle. A key element of the AHP *Therapeutic Compendium* is that it will be reviewed by multi-disciplinary groups of reviewers representing herbal and naturopathic medicine on the traditional use side and medical doctors, pharmacists, pharmacologists and toxicologists on the science side. When completed the *Therapeutic Compendium* will represent one of the most comprehensive and balanced reviews of the totality of the *Cannabis* literature anywhere in the world.

When is the anticipated release date of the AHP *Monograph and Therapeutic Compendium*?

The *Standards of Identity, Quality, and Testing* monograph will be released first, with a target time of fourth quarter 2013. We expect the *Therapeutic Compendium* can be released within 4–6 months after that.

Where can people get more information about the AHP *Monograph and Therapeutic Compendium*?

www.herbal-ahp.org

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