



ASA Achieves First Cannabis ISO 17065 Accreditation



The Americans for Safe Access PFC Program has achieved accreditation to the ISO/IEC 17065:2012 standard for certifying bodies (Certificate #5284.01), becoming the first and only compliance program to obtain international accreditation for cannabis. ISO accreditation certifies that the program's policies and procedures have been vetted and validated by a team of auditors from an internationally recognized organization. Third party certifications are common in many legal industries and markets, and governments often use them to ensure the safety of products and services.

"ISO accreditation is a crucial step in the acceptance and integration of cannabis into

our society as a real medicine," said PFC Director Heather Despres. "This validates the work that ASA has been doing through the PFC program since its launch in 2014 and puts weight behind the PFC seal for the companies that we have certified."

PFC standards incorporate all state, federal and international cannabis and product laws and regulations. In the PFC certification process, businesses are given recommendations for improvement and are allowed to make the necessary changes in their procedures and facilities. Preparation for licensing and regulatory inspections can help

companies avoid fines, recalls or stalled licenses.

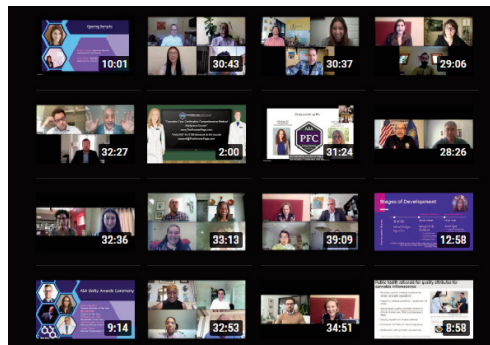
In 2009, ASA began working with American Herbal Products Association to create Recommendations and for Regulators and with the American Herbal Pharmacopoeia to publish Cannabis Inflorescence Monograph. These established the first product safety standards available for cannabis. In 2011, ASA incorporated the Code of Federal Regulations sections relating to Good Agricultural (Collection) Practices, Good Manufacturing Practices, and Good Laboratory Practices to create the PFC standards for laboratories, cultivation, manufacturers and distribution centers.



ASA Unity 2021 Conference Videos Now Online

Last month's National Medical Cannabis Unity conference, No Patient Left Behind, is now available to watch online. Highlights of panels and presentations from ASA's 9th annual conference include removing barriers to housing, healthcare and employment; kids and cannabis; controlling cannabis cost; federal standards for testing; changing federal law; and addressing veterans' issues.

ASA has also added ways to connect with speakers on the Unity 2021 Speakers page.



"We're happy to make the most accessible ASA conference yet even more accessible by sharing the video archive free online," said ASA Executive Director Debbie Churgai. "Check it out to see where we think medical cannabis is heading and hear more about

our No Patient Left Behind campaign."

All the information and videos are available online in one place in ASA's updated Unity 2021 Program Guide. See Unity 2021 at safeaccessnow.org/watch.

House Passes SAFE Banking, Bills Reintroduced



Several important medical cannabis bills that Americans for Safe Access has championed in previous sessions of Congress are back under consideration.

On April 19, the House passed the SAFE Banking Act (introduced by Rep. Ed Perlmutter, D-CO), which would ease federal restrictions on financial institutions so they can do business with licensed cannabis operators.

On April 30, Rep. Lou Correa (D-CA) reintroduced the Veterans Medicinal Cannabis Research Act, which would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct clinical trials on the effectiveness of cannabis in treatment.

In the Senate, Sen. Brian Schatz (D-HI) introduced the Veterans Medical Cannabis Safe Harbor Act on April 16. If enacted, the bill would allow legal cannabis use by veterans living in states with medical access. It would also authorize the VA to study medical cannabis.

House and Senate versions of the MORE Act, which passed the House last year, are likely to be reintroduced in the next few weeks. The MORE Act would remove cannabis from Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act and impose a federal tax on retail cannabis that would fund both cannabis job training programs and the expungement of criminal records related to marijuana offences.

Federal Agencies Take Steps to Aid Research

Two federal agencies took positive steps in this month to advance cannabis research. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) designated 5mg of THC as the basic unit of dosing in an effort to standardize medical cannabis research. Prior to this, researchers have used variable amounts as a "dose," making it difficult to compare between studies.

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) also took a long-awaited step toward expanding medical cannabis research. Groups who applied under the Obama administration for authorization to grow cannabis for federally approved research are finally being notified that they will be able to do so.

Alabama Passes Medical Cannabis Act

In May, Alabama established a medical cannabis program when Governor Kay Ivey signed Senate Bill 46. Patients with medical conditions ranging from cancer and chronic pain to depression and panic disorder can qualify to possess up to a 70-day supply by registering with the program. Recommending physicians must complete a 4-hour certifying course in medical cannabis. The state will license cultivators, manufacturers and retail dispensaries to provide safe access.

Activist Profile: Philippe Lucas, PhD, Victoria, Canada

When Philippe Lucas got a hepatitis C diagnosis as a college student in 1995 he could not have imagined it would put him on a path to becoming a groundbreaking patient advocate and being named ASA's 2021 Cannabis Researcher of the Year.

At that time, hepatitis C didn't even have a name. It was just non-Hep A, non-Hep B, an incurable progressive disease that slowly destroyed the liver. Soon after his diagnosis, he developed symptoms including nausea and appetite loss.

When he asked his doctor if he was dying and what he could do to fight it, giving up alcohol and tobacco was the answer.

"I'm French Canadian, so those were my drugs of choice," Philippe says. "But I was resigned to giving them up and went cold turkey."

He turned to cannabis to manage the withdrawal and cravings. It proved effective, but he was worried about how it might affect his liver, so he started looking up the medical research on cannabis. He was shocked.

"The research contradicted what the government had told me," Philippe says. "I discovered that cannabis wasn't the lesser of two evils—it was helpful!"

Within a few months, Philippe was feeling better physically, emotionally, and psychologically than he had in a long time. But in the late 1990s, finding a safe, consistent supply of cannabis was not easy.

"I thought, if college students have trouble getting cannabis, what's a 65-year-old woman with cancer going to do?" Philippe remembers. "After looking at the compassion clubs that were developing elsewhere in North America, like Denis Peron's in San Francisco and the BCCCS in Vancouver led by Hilary Black, I decided to start one to help patients."

The Vancouver Island Compassion Society (VICS), one of Canada's first dispensaries, opened its doors in 1999. Philippe would serve as its executive director for the next decade. The research he conducts today started with things he heard from the patients at VICS.

"We saw an influx of patients with HIV and Hep-C resulting from their IV drug use," Philippe says. "They had cannabis recommendations for those conditions, but they shared with us that it was reducing their cravings for opioids, meth and alcohol. I realized that was flipping the script on the gateway theory. Cannabis is exactly the opposite. It's an exit drug."

Patients' patterns of cannabis use and its impact on the use of other substances became the focus of his research at University of Victoria. He has now published over two dozen academic articles on medical cannabis and serves as vice-president, Global Patient Access & Research at Tilray, the world's largest international cannabis company.

But the road to these successes has not lacked

struggle. Within a year of opening VICS, local police raided the facility and Philippe's home, resulting in three counts of drug trafficking.

As his case was working its way through the courts, Philippe qualified as one of the country's first legal patients, but the process was long and cumbersome. Nor had the government established a way for qualifying patients to legally obtain cannabis except by cultivating it. As a result, Philippe continued to provide cannabis illegally through VICS, even as he awaited sentencing on the trafficking counts.

Philippe had pled guilty to all, just as he had cooperated with police, explaining how VICS operated and why. When it came time for sentencing in 2002, the judge granted Philippe an absolute discharge, praising his principled work doing for patients what Health Canada had failed to do. That ruling paved the way for dispensaries in Canada.

Nonetheless, police returned to raid VICS's production and research facility a few years later, ironically seizing the low-THC hemp plants VICS had developed as a placebo for medical trials.

Philippe's experience with the courts had made him all the more interested in the Ed Rosenthal case that led to the founding of Americans for Safe Access in 2002.

"I was incredibly inspired by what I saw ASA doing," Philippe says. He reached out to ASA founder Steph Sherer and ultimately co-founded Canadians for Safe Access, modeled on ASA. It would become the largest medical cannabis patient rights organization in Canada. He would go on to present about his work and research at ASA conferences, and now serves on ASA's Advisory Board.

After 10 years, Philippe left VICS to focus on municipal community building, winning election to city council and then regional government as he continued his PhD work. At Tilray, he now leads a variety of international patient research projects.

"Being part of the healing process for patients at VICS was a unique experience, but only a few thousand could benefit," Philippe says. "Now, working with Tilray and internationally, I have the privilege of helping tens of thousands of patients around the world."

Via surveys, prospective studies and clinical trials, Philippe continues the work of translating the voice and experience of patients into data that inform policies and increase safe access to medical cannabis for patients in need.

"Nearly everything we know about medical cannabis is because brave, determined patients shared their experiences," Philippe says.



Action Alert: Urge Your Rep to Cosponsor the VA Act

The VA Medicinal Cannabis Research Act. Rep. Lou Correa (CA-46) reintroduced this important legislation on April 30 at ASA's Unity conference. The bill would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct clinical trials on medicinal effectiveness of cannabis in treating conditions disproportionately affecting veterans. Contact your member of Congress today and urge them to co-sponsor this bill for veterans. Take action online now at www.safeaccessnow.org/va_research

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