



UN Takes First Look at Status of Cannabis Under International Law

The international effort to change the classification of cannabis to allow medical use has taken a big step forward. In late July, the head of the World Health Organization (WHO) sent a formal letter to the Secretary General of the United Nations (UN), informing him that the WHO's Expert Committee on Drug Dependence (ECDD) had determined that cannabidiol (CBD) does not need to be scheduled at all.

"The Committee recommended that preparations considered to be pure CBD should not be scheduled within the International Drug

Control Conventions," wrote WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.



He also notified the UN that the WHO experts found evidence that cannabis, THC, and extracts do not fit the current, highly restrictive classification, so they will undertake a "critical review" of those in November, the first every done by the WHO or the UN.

The WHO determination follows testimony and evidence presented by Americans for Safe

Access and other members of the International Medical Cannabis Patients Coalition (IMCPC) in Geneva, Switzerland in June. ASA and IMCPC submitted four reports on cannabis and its components that convinced the ECDD that cannabis is "a relatively safe drug."

The UN also received a summary of findings that notes "There are no case reports of abuse or dependence relating to the use of pure CBD. No public health problems have been associated with CBD use," and "CBD has been found to be generally well tolerated with a good

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First Southern California Laboratory Achieves PFC Certification



ASA's Patient Focused Certification (PFC) program last month certified Consumer Safety Analytics (AKA CannaSafe) Laboratory of Van Nuys, California for laboratory analysis of medical cannabis products. CannaSafe is the first laboratory to be awarded certification in southern California through the PFC program.

"CannaSafe has demonstrated through the PFC certification process a commitment to high standards of testing that will ensure cannabis safety and consumer confidence in California's burgeoning cannabis market," said PFC Director Heather Despres. "CannaSafe sets a standard for other laboratories to meet."

PFC is the only nonprofit, third-party certification program for the medical cannabis industry based on quality standards issued by the

American Herbal Products Association (AHPA) and the American Herbal Pharmacopoeia (AHP). The AHP and AHPA cannabis guidelines offer the most comprehensive regulatory and



product safety guidance, as well as Best Business Practices for the production of cannabis and cannabis products. Components of these guidance documents have been

ASA Executive Director Steph Sherer. "We urge other states to follow the lead of Illinois."

Illinois's new law also eliminates barriers to patients. Qualifying individuals can now obtain provisional registrations while their application is being processed so there is no waiting period for access to medical cannabis. Also ended are fingerprint and criminal background checks to enroll in the medical cannabis program.

Over 6 million opioid prescriptions were filled in Illinois in 2017. In contrast, there are only approximately 40,000 patients currently enrolled in the Illinois Medical Cannabis. The state lost 1,946 individuals to fatal opioid overdose in 2016.

included in several states' regulations.

"Going through the process of PFC certification has brought numerous benefits to our business and our clients as well as their patients and con-

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Congressional Pressure Builds for Research



One of the many barriers to medical research on cannabis may soon be gone, if members of Congress have their say. A bipartisan bill to create more access to research cannabis will receive a vote in a key House committee, and Senators are again urging the Department of Justice to stop stalling on the issue.

The House Judiciary Committee is scheduled to vote this month on the Medicinal Cannabis Research Act (H.R. 5634), its author, Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-FL-1) told Forbes. The bill, which has 40 bipartisan cosponsors, would require the federal government to issue new cultivation licenses for research purposes.

Access to research materials has been stymied by a lack of supply from the sole authorized source, the federal research farm operated by the National Institute of Drug Abuse. Two years since the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agreed to issue more licenses, none have been issued.

The Department of Justice has effectively blocked the process by refusing to act on any applications sent over from the DEA.

Members of Congress have been applying pressure to the Trump Administration, target-

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Illinois Takes Direct Step to Fight Opioid Crisis



Illinois took a bold step to fight the opioid crisis with medical cannabis last month. Governor Bruce Rauner (R) travelled to the Chicago Recovery Alliance, a nonprofit that works to prevent heroin overdoses, to sign a bill that will allow patients to trade in opioid prescriptions for medical cannabis.

SB 336, introduced by state Senator Don Harmon, says a doctor may authorize the use of medical cannabis immediately for any patient who qualifies for a prescription of OxyContin, Percocet, Vicodin or other opioids.

"This bill is an example of what ASA has been urging policymakers to do to combat an epidemic that is claiming 115 lives a day," said

ASA Activist Profile: Tom Duncan, in memoriam

Tom Duncan, co-founder of Iowans for Safe Access and recipient of ASA's Courage Award in 2017, passed away on August 15, 2018, after living with cancer for years. He was 60. A humble, tireless advocate for access to medical cannabis for all those in need, Tom attend many of ASA's National Medical Cannabis Unity Conferences and lobbied Senator Chuck Grassley's office relentlessly.



Tom's last victory as an advocate, just days before his death, was to change the University Iowa Hospital and Clinic policy to allow patients to bring in cannabis oil and medicate in their room.

"I was very sad to hear about our movement's loss of Tom Duncan," said Steph Sherer, pictured with Tom at the Unity Conference last year. "He was inspiration to all of us at ASA and such a lovely person."

A resident of Jefferson, Iowa, where he was buried late last month, Tom worked as a commodities broker for several years, as well as

with his father on the family farm there.

After his father died in 2008, Tom took on caring for his elderly mother, Bonnie, and his brother Jay, who has Down Syndrome. Tom also worked for a time at Genesis, an organization that provides support for people with disabilities, and was active in Aktion Club, a service club for adults with disabilities.



"If you weren't his friend, that was by your choice, as he met everyone where they were and respected everyone," says one of his hometown friends.

His friends remember him for his love of ice cream and his way with children. Advocates will remember how Tom worked tirelessly for safe access to medical cannabis on both the state and national levels. He was a generous man who always demurred when complimented on his advocacy, giving credit to the many mothers in Iowa for the wins they achieved. Patients everywhere have lost a great champion. He will be sorely missed.

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sumers," said Antonio Frazier, Director of Operations at CannaSafe. "The PFC program has helped us attain the highest levels of standards and consistency in testing cannabis products, which offered additional measures and considerations. We will also be offering a discount on testing services to other cannabis businesses enrolled in the PFC program. Further, the program has also saved us potentially thousands of dollars by ensuring we were prepared for regulatory inspections and the staff is properly trained," added Fraizer.

To achieve PFC certification, laboratories must pass two assessments each cycle. Assessment involves a facility inspection and review of method validation reports, employee training records, and other requirements.

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ing Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Robert Wilkie, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA). This month's letter was the second Sessions has received from Sens. Kamala Harris (D-CA) and Orrin Hatch (R-UT), asking why the Department of Justice is not moving forward with licensing research cultivation facilities. Their April letter never got a reply.

The letter to the head of the VA urges new clinical trials of cannabis for conditions affecting veterans. The members of Congress point out that the VA has the authority to conduct studies on the health benefits and risks of cannabis. The letter was signed by the chairmen and ranking members of the House and Senate veterans affairs committees -- Sens. Dan Sullivan (R-AK) and Jon Tester (D-MT), and Reps. Phil Roe (R-TN-1) and Tim Walz (D-MN-1).

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safety profile."

The ECDD's "Critical Review" of cannabis and its derivatives will include the chemistry, pharmacology, toxicology, epidemiology, and therapeutic use. The results of the review will be sent to the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs, which will adopt or reject them at its meeting in March 2019. Based on the ECDD's initial findings, the experts are likely to recommend that the UN reschedule cannabis, THC, resin, extracts and tinctures.

Such a recommendation may be welcome. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was prime minister of Portugal when it decriminalized all drugs in 2001, a decision he lauded in an address to the UN's Commission on Narcotic Drugs last year.

If the UN ultimately decides to change marijuana's status under international law, it would trigger a review on U.S. scheduling,

ACTION ALERT: Urge Congress to Find the Facts

BuzzFeed News reports the Trump Administration is secretly preparing a smear campaign about cannabis that includes soliciting negative stories and statements about it from federal agencies. Good policy requires honest conversations with lawmakers, and the public is entitled to unbiased studies and information about cannabis.

The Marijuana Data Collection Act (H.R. 6495) can insure that impartial approach. The bill would require the Department of Health and Human Services to coordinate information gathering with the Department of Justice, the Department of Labor and the various states. It would also direct the National Academy of Sciences to publish a biannual study on the health, safety and economic effects of state programs.

You can help by urging your Congressional representative to become a cosponsor the Marijuana Data Collection Act today at safeaccessnow.org/findthefacts.

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