

Medical Cannabis UPDATE

Ensuring Hawaii's qualified patients have access to safe medical cannabis products through an efficient system of responsible, licensed dispensaries

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Hawaii's Third Private Laboratory Preparing for Onsite Inspection

A third private laboratory is scheduled to submit its pesticide validation studies to the Hawaii State Laboratories Division this month and prepare for an onsite laboratory inspection.

This is good news for Hawaii's medical cannabis dispensaries. If the Oahu-based laboratory is able to successfully meet the requirements and demonstrate it has the capacity and proficiency to test medical cannabis, it could be the third laboratory available to conduct plant testing to advance Hawaii's dispensary system.

In July 2017, Steep Hill Hawaii on Oahu became the first laboratory to receive its provisional certificate.

In October 2017, Pharmed Hawaii LLC became the first private independent laboratory on Maui that was given the go-ahead to begin testing medical cannabis from Hawaii's licensed medical cannabis dispensaries and registered patients and caregivers. 

Petition Process Update:

ALS Added to List of Qualifying Conditions for Medical Cannabis Use

After a rigorous review and analysis, the Hawaii Department of Health has added Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) to the list of qualifying conditions for medical cannabis use.

DOH reviewed all written and oral testimony submitted for a public hearing as part of the petition process and reviewed available peer-reviewed scientific evidence. Of the 29 states and U.S. jurisdictions that permit medical cannabis, 19 include ALS as a qualifying health condition.

DOH found little evidence to support the value of medical cannabis for ALS; however, with the severity and prognosis of ALS, DOH determined medical cannabis was appropriate for patients diagnosed with ALS after a comprehensive assessment by a patient's physician or APRN and a risk-benefit discussion.

The Petition Process

In April 2017, the Department of Health opened the petition process to allow certified patients, physicians, and advance practice registered nurses (APRNs) to petition the department to add new debilitating medical conditions to the existing list of conditions that could benefit from the use medical cannabis.

Unlike prescription medications that undergo rigorous clinical trials for the treatment of certain health conditions before being released to consumers,

medical cannabis does not have that same level of evaluation by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Under Hawaii Revised Statutes, all new conditions must be thoroughly reviewed from an evidence-based perspective and be subject to a public hearing. This year, DOH received two such requests and began the review process.

The other condition submitted for consideration was General Anxiety Disorder (GAD). This was declined because at this time there is inconclusive medical evidence that cannabis has beneficial use in the treatment or alleviation of symptoms of anxiety, social phobia, and Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD), and no evidence specific to GAD. Additionally, because the prevalence of GAD, high rate of comorbidities, and dearth of scientific evidence to support the use of cannabis in the treatment of GAD, the potential for adverse outcomes is a public health concern.

Next year's deadline to add new health conditions is February 19, 2018. The petition form is available online for certified patients, physicians, and APRNs and must be submitted by February 19, 2018 to be included in the public hearings tentatively scheduled for May 2018. Any petitions received after February 19, 2018 may be considered the following year. 