

How a Cannabinoid Medicine Specialist Practices as a Primary Care Physician **by Kevin Baiko, M.D.**

Since I am a doctor specializing in cannabinoid medicine, some of you may wonder how I practice as a primary care physician to my patients. Drugs are dangerous. They're deadly at the wrong dose, often addictive, and I much prefer not to prescribe them. Cannabis, on the other hand, is not a drug. It is an ancient herbal medicine. It's safer than pure cane sugar, and its cannabinoid healing properties are awe-inspiring. This is my kind of medicine... a safe and amazingly versatile (not just medicinally speaking!) plant. People can grow it in their own yards, use it to treat a wide variety of ailments, and they often find the experience of using it enjoyable, perhaps because cannabis supplements a chronically stressed out endocannabinoid (eCB) system, restoring its ability to maintain proper psycho-neuro-immunological function of mental and physical homeostasis. In other words, it helps us feel more of the relaxed and balanced version of ourselves again. Be that as it may; whereas my pharmacopeia primarily consists of cannabis, most of my fellow physicians specifically avoid the whole medical marijuana thing, preferring instead to specialize in the prescription of chemicals patented by a pharmaceutical industrial complex with vested interests in keeping health care providers, lawmakers and the general public conditioned and in line with their profit-making agenda. Quite a few physician employers actually prohibit their doctors from helping people, however qualified, apply for the state medical cannabis privilege. And so I enjoy a successful practice. I witness healing miracles on a daily basis. I love my patients and am so thankful for the Aloha reflected back.

Year after year, I take note of how my patients progress in response to their medical cannabis treatment. Often times they tell me that they much prefer it to pharmaceutical medication. Not surprisingly, I commonly notice my patients successfully managing their conditions on fewer and fewer pharmaceutical drugs, visit by visit, as these pharmacy purchased pills and capsules become to be seen as the less desirable alternatives to the cannabis they can grow in their own garden. Doesn't it make sense that natural medicines like cannabis be seen as our primary, first line medicines, only turning to pharmaceuticals (and their concentrated dangers) when absolutely necessary? I certainly think so! And my patients tend to agree. I see patients throughout the year as necessity demands, though I usually follow-up with them on an annual basis, which conveniently matches the effective life span of the state issued medical cannabis ("blue" - because it's blue) card. Whether my patients are applying or reapplying to get registered with the state to legally use cannabis as a medicine, they generally must endure the same treatment each time from Doctor Baiko. I perform the mandatory history and physical to determine whether or not one is qualified, strictly in accordance with the Hawaii Revised Statutes. I discuss my findings with them and recommend treatment options, including, but not limited to methods and routes of administration, physical and mental exercises to complement medication, even recipes for home-crafted healing remedies. Qualified applicants, even those renewing, get to hear me review the state medical cannabis laws before completing the application with me. Basically, my goal is to empower my patients to take care of themselves through the customization of care.

To my recollection the term "Primary Care Physician" (or alternatively "Primary Care Provider" or just "PCP") is a term originally coined by the health insurance agency, but I like the term because it's descriptive of the continuity and customization of care I provide the patients in my cannabinoid medicine practice. Patients are lucky to see their assigned health insurance PCP more than once – if ever – and, for the lucky ones, seldom does one doctor manage all the medicines and therapies utilized by a patient, particularly when herbal remedies and alternative therapies (like chiropractic, bodywork, acupuncture, etc) are factored into the patient's healing resources along with other insurance paid-for specialists. While I do charge for my services at typical physician rates, I refuse to involve myself with the health insurance industry and its bottom-line - make money at patient's expense – prime directive, which, not coincidentally, nearly always refuses to reimburse for cannabinoid medicine services

anyways. Our cannabis certification service prices incorporate office visit fees, state application fee, and the cost of dealing with the state throughout the year on our patients' behalf (= "...priceless"). The term "Primary Care Physician" is descriptive of the doctor who considers the "big picture" of each patient so as to counsel the whole patient in one's management of his or her own health matters. Education is key to this empowerment process, and while every patient's case is unique, there are a few topics I find myself sharing with my patients on a regular basis, and I believe they're worthy of mentioning here as well.

Cannabis as a de-stressor...

Perhaps the greatest challenge a primary care physician faces is to inspire his patients to reduce the stress in their lives. I am convinced that chronic stress is the number one contributor to acute and chronic illness. Stress is best understood as a physiologic response to a perceived threat. Whether or not any real threat exists, when we hear a police siren behind us, most experience a rush of the stress hormone, adrenaline, signaling our bodies to fight or flee. Of course, neither option tends to be constructive in modern society. And so we mount stress response after stress response, often ruminating upon perceived threats for hours, days, even years at a time, as our bodies suffer and gradually break down in the aftermath. The eCB system is on the front lines of this perpetual barrage of stress responses. While endogenous eCBs promote the relaxation of the nervous system, stress hormones actually down-regulate the expression of eCB receptors throughout the nervous system, so over time chronic stress can lead to dysfunctional nervous regulation of every system in the body. And this is why cannabis helps people de-stress. It supplements an overly taxed, down-regulated eCB system. This property alone make cannabis an invaluable aid in both treatment and prevention of a wide variety of chronic illnesses.

While a majority of my patients report that cannabis helps them relax, I cannot emphasize enough the importance of addressing the underlying causes of their stress. If you're stressed about not having a job, smoking a joint might help you sleep, but tomorrow you're still out of a job. As the Serenity Prayer goes: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference." Here, simplifying life and stream-lining its responsibilities goes a long way, but there's more to it, because stress is our response to a *perceived* threat. Perception can be re-trained, so much so that we really can learn to live by the credo: "1. Don't sweat the small stuff. 2. It's all small stuff." Cannabis use can actually aid in this cognitive perceptual re-training process. Think about it... If a situation seems less stressful after using cannabis, was it really a threatening situation to start with? This re-training occurs naturally in many cannabis users, helping to explain why chronic cannabis users are characteristically mellow even without cannabis in their system. On the other hand, many chronic partakers of cannabis use the herb as an escape from real life responsibilities, which is generally fine on a short term basis, but generally disempowering in the long run.

Cannabis as a superfood...

Another great challenge a primary care physician faces is to inspire his patients to eat right. Food can be both medicine and its antithesis. In addition to meeting the body's basic fuel requirements, our diet ideally supplies us with the essential vitamins, minerals, fatty acids, anti-oxidants, and so on, required for healthy maintenance of the body's tissues, organs and inter-dynamic systems. Not all foods are equal. Some do more harm than good, as in the majority of overly processed, refined, carbonated, fried, and "fast" foods and beverages readily available for mass consumption - not that I'm the food police. As noted above, it doesn't help to stress over our diet, but given that we are surrounded by less than ideal, unnatural food choices, we certainly stand to benefit from growing more healthful food items for consumption. Cannabis is actually a superfood. Its seeds alone "contain all the essential amino acids and essential fatty acids necessary to maintain healthy human life. No other single plant

source has the essential amino acids in such an easily digestible form, nor has the essential fatty acids in as perfect a ratio to meet human nutritional needs” (Lynn Osburn: Hemp Line Journal, July-August 1992, pp. 14-15, Vol. I No. 1), but the seeds aren't the only consumable part of this plant.

The leaves and flowers are also edible and, when consumed raw, are non-psychoactive. Before the herb is allowed to dry/cure or to be heated, its *THC* (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol), that notorious cannabinoid that gets people high or stoned, rests in the non-psychoactive acidic state (*THC-a*). While *THC-a* lacks its non-acidic counterpart's ability to alter how we perceive pain, along with its appetite stimulant properties, it does possess direct analgesic (pain-killing) and anti-proliferative (anti-tumor) properties. However, as in its smoked form, the real healing magic in raw cannabis lies in its content of *CBD* (cannabidiol), the cannabinoid boasting anti-oxidant, analgesic, anti-spasmodic, anti-emetic (anti-nausea), anti-cancer, neuro-protective, anti-diabetic, anti-ischemic, and still more, effects. And, with the *THC* in its acidic non-psychoactive state, much more of the herb can be consumed, maximizing the potential of beneficial *CBD* effects. Most mammals (including humans) would probably benefit from the ingestion of cannabis in its raw form, though I especially recommend it to my patients suffering from auto-immune disorders (like Lupus and Crohn's disease), neurodegenerative conditions (like multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease), fibromyalgia and all forms of cancer. Even when used in its cured/smoked form upon such notoriously difficult-to-treat conditions, I regularly witness healing results substantial enough as to make the standard-of-care pharmaceutical alternatives seem barbaric in comparison. Cannabis in its raw form promises even more phenomenal results! And all you have to do is grow cannabis and consume its leaves and flowers raw, juicing them like wheat grass, blending them into fruit smoothies or just grazing off the plant while tending to it. Frozen raw juiced cannabis seems to hold its medicinal integrity for at least a month. One of the world's leading proponents of raw cannabis consumption, Dr. William Courtney generally recommends the ingestion of 15 leaves + 2 (1 inch) buds spread out throughout each day. For a more detailed overview of the subject, please visit: www.medicaljane.com/cannabis-the-foundation-of-health/

Cannabis as a complement to physical therapy...

Yet another great challenge a primary care physician faces is to inspire his patients to exercise right. I am a firm believer in the osteopathic concept that pain associated with structural abnormalities should be addressed by correcting the abnormalities – not just by treating the symptoms. While a good “crack” of a joint sometimes does the trick, generally more work is required to successfully correct pain stemming from somatic dysfunction. As I frequently tell my patients, “Cannabis can help treat pain, as can chiropractic, acupuncture, bodywork or prescription medications, but unless you work on this yourself, the pain will just come back, requiring more cannabis, chiropractic, acupuncture, bodywork or prescription medications.” By “work” I mean both directed exercise and stretching, but also the maintenance and awareness of posture, both on and off the job. To these ends, I have found cannabis a remarkable complement to physical therapy. As cannabis eases pain and relaxes muscles, it also calms mental restlessness, increasing body awareness, while simultaneously rendering much of the perceived pain to be a less threatening experience – almost like a curiosity to push through. While these effects are in themselves therapeutic, they lend the body-mind the capacity and patience to stretch far more deeply, for greater and longer lasting therapeutic effect, leading to increased range of motion with less pain. I daresay, that many chronic debilitating pain conditions can be effectively overcome by this method. Of course, professional direction helps, and I always aim to customize my medicated therapeutic stretch prescriptions, but as mentioned above, cannabis helps the patient become more aware of how the body wants to stretch. It's almost like we have our own personalized yoga master locked up inside our bodies, and cannabis is the key.

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