



Factum

Two in Three (65%) Canadians Would Take a Drug Containing Cannabis if Prescribed by a Doctor and Covered by Insurance

Majority of Canadians (54%) Believe Taking Cannabis for Medical Reasons Without Consulting a Doctor Poses a Risk

Toronto, ON, December 14, 2018 — While there has been much attention paid to the recent legalization of recreational marijuana in Canada, public opinion polls hint that legalization may also have positive effects for those who might benefit from medical cannabis through prescription drugs. A recent Ipsos study, carried out on behalf of Tetra Bio-Pharma, has revealed that two in three (65%) Canadians would be willing (36% very/29% somewhat) to take a drug containing cannabis that their doctor prescribed, if approved by Health Canada and covered by either public or private insurance. In particular, those more likely to be willing to take these drugs include men (69%), those aged 18-34 (72%), and residents of Ontario (71%). By contrast, if these drugs were not covered by public or private insurance and patients had to pay out of pocket, four in ten (39%) would still be willing to do so (14% strongly/25% somewhat), particularly among men (44%), those aged 18-34 (51%), and residents of BC (50%).

Furthermore, over four in ten (43%) report being willing (23% very/21% somewhat) to participate in a clinical trial testing cannabis-based medicines if approved by Health Canada and they qualified based on existing conditions.

New Avenues for Pharmaceutical Research

Indeed, the opportunity to develop medicines based on cannabis could open the door to many new forms of treatment. An overwhelming majority (82%) of Canadians agree (34% strongly agree/48% somewhat) that cannabis can relieve pain and other symptoms. Furthermore, over two-thirds (68%) of Canadians are willing (30% very/38% somewhat) willing to take cannabis to help manage chronic pain, lack of appetite, anxiety, or depression. This is potentially interesting for those who suffer from conditions that could be treated with cannabis-based medicines. In fact, this proportion reaches 84% (60% strongly/24%) among those who suffer from three or more conditions that could be treated with cannabis-based medicines.

One in six Canadians (17%) say they are closely following the progress being made with Health Canada approving clinical trials for cannabis-based medicines, while just over four in ten (41%) say they have heard of this development, but are not following it at all. Another 18% said they thought cannabis medicines already existed and the remaining one-quarter (24%) said they were not at all aware. Understandably, those suffering from one or more conditions that could be treated with medical cannabis are more likely to be following this news closely.

The Doctor Knows Best

This is not to say that Canadians are in a rush to turn to cannabis to alleviate their medical conditions on their own; they still would like buy-in from their health care professional before starting to take cannabis drugs. Almost nine in ten (88%) believe that there is some degree of risk (25% major/29% moderate/34% minor) in taking cannabis for health conditions without consulting a physician.

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Canadians' level of trust in medical practitioners remains high when it comes to their judgement over whether to prescribe cannabis for medical purposes. Just under three-quarters (72%) agree (29% strongly /43% somewhat) that they would trust a drug containing cannabis if their doctor prescribed it. It really does seem that Canadians think that the doctor knows what's best; over six in ten (62%) believe (17% strongly/45% somewhat) their doctor would recommend cannabis to them if they were in terrible pain.

However, given that cannabis is a relatively new treatment in Canada, not everyone is entirely confident that their doctor is up-to-date on cannabis treatments. Only a slim majority of Canadians agree that their doctor knows how to treat them with cannabis (56%; 14% strongly/42% somewhat) and that their doctor is well-informed on how to do so (53%; 13% strongly/41% somewhat), suggesting that Canadians believe there could be room for improvement in knowledge.

If ordinary Canadians are open to taking cannabis-based medicines, it seems that doctors are also open to prescribing them to patients. While only one in ten (11%) Canadians has asked their doctor to prescribe cannabis for a health condition, 45% of those who did so report that their doctor prescribed cannabis willingly. Another 20% said their doctor prescribed cannabis, but was hesitant, while 11% reported that their doctor prescribed another drug instead. Only 9% of those who asked their doctor to prescribe cannabis responded that their doctor refused to do so because they believed there is no scientific evidence that cannabis-based medicines are safe and effective.

Changing Profiles of Cannabis Users

Openness to cannabis for medical purposes may eventually shift the profile of the average cannabis user in Canada. Among those who don't currently describe themselves as cannabis users:

- 77% agree that cannabis can reduce pain and other symptoms (22% strongly/55% somewhat)
- 63% agree that using cannabis for medical reasons does more good than harm (15% strongly/48% somewhat)
- 63% agree that they would trust taking a drug containing cannabis if their doctor prescribed it (17% strongly/46% somewhat)
- 57% agree that they would be willing to take cannabis to help manage chronic pain, lack of appetite, anxiety, or depression (15% strongly/42% somewhat)
- 53% would be likely to take a Health-Canada-approved drug containing cannabis if prescribed by their doctor and covered by either private or public insurance (22% very willing/31% somewhat willing)
- 24% would be likely to take a Health-Canada-approved drug containing cannabis if prescribed by their doctor but not covered by insurance and had to pay out of pocket (6% very willing/17% somewhat willing)

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About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between December 7 and December 10, 2018, on behalf of Tetra Bio-Pharma. For this survey, a sample of 2,002 Canadians aged 18+ was interviewed online via the Ipsos I-Say panel. Quota sampling and weighting were employed to balance demographics to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within ± 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all Canadian adults been polled. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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About Ipsos

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