



Zurich, 29 July 2024

Medical prescription of cannabis in Switzerland

Dear Sir or Madam

With this letter, we would like to draw your attention to a change in the Narcotics Act. **Since 1 August 2022, doctors have been allowed to prescribe cannabis for medical purposes without restriction.** This change in the law represents a milestone in medical care and opens up new possibilities for the treatment of numerous ailments and diseases.

Cannabis is a remedy with a centuries-old tradition and has a variety of therapeutic effects. **It has anti-inflammatory, pain-relieving, relaxing and anxiety-relieving effects and can have a positive influence on focus, mood and mental health.** These diverse applications make it a valuable addition to medicine, especially for chronically ill and elderly patients who often suffer from the side effects of pharmaceutical medication. Cannabis is now being used medicinally again in many countries. This possibility now also exists in Switzerland.

Despite this positive development, some challenges remain. **One problem is the widespread stigmatisation of medical use. Many patients report that they are subject to prejudice and are not taken seriously when they ask about cannabis.** This attitude makes access to effective treatment more difficult.

Another point is the still insufficient education and training of medical professionals. There are already specialised doctors who offer competent advice and prescribe cannabis. However, these specialists are mainly to be found in German-speaking Switzerland. There is an urgent need for nationwide training programmes to disseminate knowledge about the medical use of cannabis.

The FOPH estimates that there are over 100,000 affected people in Switzerland who are treating themselves illegally with cannabis. Please support your patients if they ask for a legal prescription.

In practice, it has also been shown that many patients are not sufficiently supplied with cannabis despite having a prescription. Finding the right dosage together with the healthcare professional remains a challenge. Cannabis is often only prescribed very carefully, even though those affected already know what they need from years of self-therapy. However, these dosages are often categorised as too high without any scientific background.

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Another obstacle is the financial burden. **Only a few patients receive a cost approval for cannabis flowers from their health insurance company. This is somewhat easier for extracts, but these are extremely expensive compared to the flowers.** This means that obtaining the medicine from the pharmacy is a financial challenge for many. Please support your patients so that the stigma disappears for health insurance companies too.

Our association is committed to solving these problems and facilitating access to the medical use of cannabis. We are happy to share our many years of experience with medical professionals and fight for the rights of patients.

Your support and openness towards this form of therapy are crucial to improving the supply situation and overcoming the stigma.

We therefore ask you to familiarise yourself with the new possibilities of cannabis therapy. You can ensure that cannabis is recognised as an equal medicine and that the best possible therapy is made available to sick people.

Thank you for your attention and your commitment.

Yours sincerely

Franziska Quadri
President
Medical Cannabis Association Switzerland