

SPEAKING TO YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT MEDICAL CANNABIS

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Getting to “Yes”

1. Use your “therapeutic relationship”:
 - a. The therapeutic relationship is one of the strongest tools in the doctor’s toolbox. Use that to build rapport with your doctor. Please don’t be confrontational, threatening, wheedling or demanding.
2. Book the right kind of appointment:
 - a. Book a “counseling” appointment so you’ll have at least 20 minutes with your MD. If you feel comfortable with it, suggest your doctor bill a “counseling code” to cover the time you’ll need.
3. Get your doctor onside:
 - a. “We’ve tried several conventional treatments for my chronic pain. I’m open to other suggestions, but would you be open to a trial of medical cannabis?”
 - b. Use medical terms: Say medical cannabis – not marijuana, pot, hash, ganga or weed.
 - c. Tell them that you want to start a “Trial of Therapy”.
 - d. Assure them that you are only interested in vaporizing or using the oils and have no intention of smoking it.
 - e. Insist that you will be careful; that you won’t share/sell/divert and that you are only interested in reducing your pain so you can function better.
 - f. Reassure them that you have no interest in getting intoxicated, “high” or “stoned”.
4. Do some research:
 - a. Bring in some relevant studies – two good ones are:
 - i. “Efficacy and adverse effects of medical marijuana for chronic non-cancer pain. Systematic review of randomized controlled trials.” *Canadian Family Physician* 61.8 (2015): e372-e381 (this is a free full text article available for download).
 - ii. “Medical marijuana: a treatment worth trying?” *Journal of Family Practice* 65.3 (2016): 178-186.
5. Be helpful:
 - b. Bring in a completed medical cannabis treatment agreement.
 - c. Offer to do a urine drug test and be prepared to provide a sample.
 - d. Offer to sign a Medical Cannabis Treatment Agreement
 - e. Have 2 or 3 SMART goals ready. SMART goals are Simple, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely, such as walking for 30 minutes per day, going to the YMCA aqua-aerobics class 3 x weekly, working part-time, or cleaning the house for 20 minutes daily. These are the goals you want medical cannabis to help you accomplish. Achieving these goals makes your doctor see that medical cannabis is benefitting you.
 - f. Suggest a trial of low dose (1gm/day) for just 3 months.

6. Make it easy for your doctor:
 - g. Have a Licensed Producer already picked out. You can find a list of licensed producers on the Health Canada website:
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/marihuana/info/list-eng.php>
 - h. Bring in the forms that will need to be completed. Have your part already filled out.
 - i. Suggest a follow up in 2-4 weeks to review how you're doing with the medical cannabis.

Getting past "No"

1. Use the "therapeutic relationship" you have with your doctor:
 - a. Ask what their concerns are. For example:
 - i. They may just not know enough. You can help them with this. Give them the articles listed above.
 - ii. They may be worried about their College. You can go to the College website and read the policy on medical cannabis so you are educated about their concerns. Discuss it with them. The Ontario document can be found at:
<http://www.cpso.on.ca/CPSO/media/documents/Policies/Policy-Items/Marijuana-for-Medical-Purposes.pdf?ext=.pdf>.
 - iii. They may be worried about you driving. Reassure them you wouldn't drive for at least 8 hours if you felt at all dopey or intoxicated.
 - b. Ask for another appointment to talk it over again after they've had a chance to do some reading.
2. Offer alternatives:
 - a. Ask for a trial of only cannabis oils. This can be indicated on the Medical Document (sometimes called the "authorization" or "prescription").
 - b. Agree to use only low THC strains. This can also be indicated on the Medical Document.
3. If all else fails: ask your doctor for a referral to a Cannabis Clinic.
 - a. They may actually prefer someone else authorize. Agree and ask for the referral.
 - b. Tell your doctor you understand they are not comfortable authorizing medical cannabis, but you value them as your family doctor and want to continue to see them for all your other medical concerns.
 - c. Tell them you'd like to report back to them how you are doing on medical cannabis so they remain a central part of your circle of care.
 - d. Your doctor should not sanction you for asking for a referral.
4. If you cannot get past "No" consider contacting your local Cannabis Clinic directly and asking if you can see their specialist doctor without a referral. Some clinics allow this.