

U.S. PAIN FOUNDATION POSITION STATEMENT – MEDICAL MARIJUANA

U.S. Pain Foundation believes that people living with chronic illness and pain should have access to timely and appropriate treatments, which includes medical marijuana. Cannabinoids have well-documented analgesic properties that make medical marijuana an effective medicine to treat many cases of chronic pain where many traditional chronic pain medications do not.

Pain relief is one of medical marijuana's most well known benefits. Marijuana has been shown to alleviate symptoms of a huge variety of serious medical conditions including cancer, AIDS, and glaucoma, and is often an effective alternative to synthetic painkillers. The American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Public Health Association, the American Nurses Association, and even The New England Journal of Medicine endorse the use of medical marijuana for the treatment of severe chronic pain. For many seriously ill people, medical marijuana is the only medicine that relieves their pain and suffering, or treats symptoms of their medical condition, without debilitating side effects.

The term *medical marijuana* refers to using the whole unprocessed marijuana plant or its basic extracts to treat a disease or symptom. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has not recognized or approved the marijuana plant as medicine. However, scientific study of the chemicals in marijuana, called *cannabinoids*, has led to two FDA-approved medications that contain cannabinoid chemicals in pill form. Medical marijuana can replace or reduce the use of opioids in chronic pain treatment.

A growing number of states have legalized marijuana for medical use. Twenty-five states and the District of Columbia have passed medical marijuana laws legalizing the use and production of medical marijuana for qualifying patients under state law. However, the medical use of marijuana remains illegal under federal law, and patients in the remaining states are without any legal access.