

Position paper: Cannabidiol (CBD) oil

This document provides an overview on CBD oil and the recent reviewed classification of CBD oil, The Brain Tumour Charity's position, and what we are doing to address the issues raised.

What is the position of CBD oil in relation to brain tumours?

We recognise that many people affected by brain tumours are using CBD oil and other CBD products for side effects that they experience. CBD, is a cannabinoid accounting for up to 40% of the marijuana plant's extract and it does not contain its psychoactive tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). It is important to clarify the distinction of CBD oil and cannabis oil; terms that are often used interchangeably. Cannabis oil can be homemade, or bought illegally. Cannabis oil does contain the psychoactive substance THC which is illegal, as opposed to CBD oil which does not contain THC and it is currently legal as a general sale product.

However, on October 13th 2016, The Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) issued a statement explaining that it had reviewed the classification of products containing CBD and found them to meet the definition of a medicinal product. The MHRA believe that CBD has a "restoring, correcting or modifying" effect on "physiological functions" when administered to humans. An MHRA spokesperson has said:

"We have come to the opinion that products containing cannabidiol (CBD) used for medical purposes are a medicine. Medicinal products must have a product licence (marketing authorisation) before they can be legally sold, supplied or advertised in the UK, unless exempt. Licensed medicinal products have to meet safety, quality and efficacy standards to protect public health".

"If you use CBD and if you have any questions, speak to your GP or other healthcare professional".

"We have written to UK CBD stockists and manufacturers to inform them of our view. We can provide regulatory guidance to any company who may wish to apply for a licence". (1)

On November 1st 2016, the MHRA released an update, stating that they are clear on the needs of individuals using CBD products to treat or manage their symptoms of medical conditions. In order to ensure that products remain available until individuals have the opportunity to discuss their treatment with their doctor, companies have been given until 31st December 2016 to voluntarily operate within the law, by withdrawing their existing products from the market or working with MHRA to satisfy the legal requirements of the Human Medicines Regulatory.

What will the effects of the reclassification be?

Currently there is no regulatory status for CBD, and the reclassification may ensure a more transparent and honest trading market for the products.

If CBD products, including CBD oil are given a medicinal product licence, this will mean that they demonstrate having medicinal effects for many diseases including brain tumours. It could also mean that CBD oil will gain efficacy and robust evidence, which will legitimise and sustain CBD products. We believe this will ensure that health care professionals will support the prescription and use of CBD products, further legitimising and sustaining.

The access to CBD products will change, but currently it is unknown how this will be effected and whether any stockists will be able to sell the products, or whether it will be a prescribed medication. The MHRA have not yet gone into further details.

The Brain Tumour Charity's view

We can appreciate the potential long-term benefits of the reclassification of CBD. We welcome the opportunity to acknowledge the medicinal benefits of CBD and hope this will provide the product with

robust evidence meaning health care professionals will support the prescription and use. However, in the short-term it is going to be harder or even impossible to access the products legally.

CBD products are used by people affected by a brain tumour for a variety of reasons including neuropathic pain, side effects of treatment, seizures and anxiety. We think it is extremely important for people affected by a brain tumour to have the best quality of life and CBD oil helps people achieve this.

Research carried out on CBD oil has shown that it has relatively little side effects compared to other medications used to alleviate symptoms (2). For example, there is promising evidence suggesting that there is a role for CBD in treating refractory epilepsy (3). CBD also inhibits chemotherapy induced-neuropathic pain (4). We are disappointed that people will no longer be able to access CBD oil and believe that the decision to stop people accessing a product which has therapeutic benefits to them is unreasonable.

The Brain Tumour Charity believes that individual patients must be equipped to make decisions that are right for them to enjoy the best quality of life. However for people that wish to continue using CBD products after the 1st January, we are currently unaware of what the legal status of CBD oil will be. We will continue to update this information as further details become available.

What is The Brain Tumour Charity doing?

We campaign for innovation in the development and delivery of treatments that help improve quality of life for people affected by brain tumours.

We will be supporting for people to have access to CBD oil, as well as any other treatments and therapies, as quickly and as easily as possible. We aim to double survival, and halve the harm that brain tumours have on a person's quality of life. Regulation needs to move quickly to ensure they analyse the evidence and clarify its position as effectively as possible.

References

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