Medical Marijuana

What Every NP Should Know

[Your Name], MD • [Association Name] Annual Meeting • [Date]

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SECTION 1 — THIS IS NOT A NEW IDEA

Older than the pyramids.
Prescribed to a queen.

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THIS IS NOT A NEW IDEA

Ebers Papyrus, c. 1550 BCE

Pain relief in childbirth — already in the formulary.



3

THIS IS NOT A NEW IDEA

The Scythians

Herodotus: they “howled with pleasure.”

Corroborated by the Pazyryk kurgan burials, Siberia.



Historical image:
Pazyryk carpet / kurgan burial
(Wikimedia Commons)

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THIS IS NOT A NEW IDEA

A Shrine Altar, c. 8th Century BCE

Cannabis residue on an Israelite altar — Tel Arad.



Historical image:
Tel Arad shrine altar
(Wikimedia Commons)

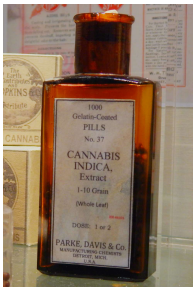
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THIS IS NOT A NEW IDEA

“One of the most valuable medicines we possess.”

— Sir J. Russell Reynolds, physician to Queen Victoria,

The Lancet, 1890



Historical image:
Parke-Davis cannabis bottle
(Wikimedia Commons)

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So how did we get from the pharmacy shelf to Schedule I?

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THE PROHIBITION STORY

One man, one bureau, one campaign.

Harry Anslinger, U.S. Federal Bureau of Narcotics, 1930–1962



Historical image: Harry Anslinger, official portrait (Wikimedia Commons)

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THE PROHIBITION STORY

The Marihuana Tax Act, 1937

AMA

opposed it — testified Congress didn't realize it targeted cannabis

1937

it passed anyway

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THE PROHIBITION STORY

1972: his own commission said decriminalize. He said no.

The Shafer Commission report, rejected by President Nixon

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THE PROHIBITION STORY

Florida's Near-Miss and Comeback

57.6%

2014 — short of the 60% supermajority required

71.3%

2016 — a landslide

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THE PROHIBITION STORY

800,000+ patients. Still no NPs.

Florida's medical marijuana program today

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THE QUICK "WHY"

The Endocannabinoid System

CB1

Brain & CNS
(movement, memory, cognition)

CB2

Immune cells
(anti-inflammatory)

THC

Partial agonist at CB1 & CB2
Psychoactive, analgesic,
appetite-stimulating

CBD

Indirect ECS modulation
Anticonvulsant, anxiolytic,
antipsychotic

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THE EVIDENCE: WHERE YOU LIVE

The girl who changed epilepsy medicine.

Charlotte Figi, Dravet syndrome, and the extract

named in her honor: Charlotte's Web (2013).

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THE EVIDENCE: WHERE YOU LIVE

Epidiolex — the Numbers (Dravet Syndrome)

38.9%

seizure reduction, CBD

13.3%

seizure reduction, placebo

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THE EVIDENCE: WHERE YOU LIVE

Multiple Sclerosis

Spasticity, pain, bladder — “probably effective” (AAN, 2014)

Nabiximols (Sativex) approved in 25+ countries — never in the U.S.

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THE EVIDENCE: WHERE YOU LIVE

Parkinson's Plus

When the diagnosis isn't quite Parkinson's.

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THE EVIDENCE: WHERE YOU LIVE

One drug, seven problems.

ALS: spasticity, pain, appetite, mood, saliva,

bronchodilation, neuroprotection — one agent.

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CHRONIC PAIN AND THE OPIOID CRISIS

The Scale of It

50M

American adults with chronic pain

600K+

opioid deaths since 1999

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CHRONIC PAIN AND THE OPIOID CRISIS

What the Evidence Actually Shows

NASEM: “substantial evidence” for chronic pain

Number needed to treat: 24

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CHRONIC PAIN AND THE OPIOID CRISIS

The Opioid-Sparing Data

45–64%

reduction in opioid use among
medical marijuana patients
(observational data)

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THE PTSD–PAIN CONNECTION

A Hidden Overlap

up to 50%

of chronic pain patients
screen positive for PTSD

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THE PTSD–PAIN CONNECTION

PC-PTSD-5

5 questions • 1 minute • 95% sensitive

- Nightmares or unwanted thoughts about the event(s)?
- Tried hard not to think about it, or avoided reminders?
- Constantly on guard, watchful, or easily startled?
- Felt numb or detached from people or surroundings?
- Felt guilty, or unable to stop blaming self or others?

Score ≥ 3 = positive screen

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IT'S ABOUT THEM

Florida NPs still can't certify a single patient.

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IT'S ABOUT THEM

What NPs Can Already Do

- Screen for qualifying conditions
- Educate patients on risks and benefits
- Refer to a certifying physician
- Monitor response and adverse effects
- Coordinate care

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IT'S ABOUT THEM

What would change in your practice tomorrow?

Discussion

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