

Veterans and their Families want better research and clinical support on cannabis as a treatment for mental health

OTTAWA, ONTARIO, CANADA, February 23, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Canada's Veterans often experience physical or psychological injuries as a result of their service — and sometimes both. Over the past several years, medical cannabis has emerged as a treatment area of significant interest to Veterans and their Families. In 2022, on the recommendations of their individual health care providers, more than 18,000 reimbursement claims were submitted involving cannabis for medical purposes through Veterans Affairs Canada.

A new report released by the Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families and the Mental Health Commission of Canada, titled "Insights into Veteran and Veteran Family Experiences with Cannabis and Mental Health," summarizes conversations with the Veteran community from a dialogue series hosted during May and June of 2022. The sessions engaged Veterans, Family members, service providers and researchers in a discussion about their experiences and perspectives on cannabis use and mental health.

The report found strong interest among Veterans and Family members to explore cannabis as a treatment option for conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder and to have more research and guidance on cannabis use and mental health.

"As one of the more than 18,000 Veterans approved by Veterans Affairs Canada to use medical cannabis, I was keen to participate in this collaborative project, as a community, our knowledge of cannabis is, in large part, based on our own experiences and the shared experiences of our peers. We are missing some of the key scientific and medical research necessary for us to make our own informed decisions about how cannabis may contribute to or jeopardize our other treatments," said Major-General (Ret'd) Glynne Hines, chair of the Atlas Institute's Veterans Reference Group, and project advisor and moderator for the dialogue series.

Additional insights:

- Health care professionals need more training and guidance on cannabis use for mental health.
- Cannabis use among Veterans continues to be highly stigmatized.
- Veterans need to know more about how cannabis works and interacts with other substances.
- The quality and independence of cannabis research matters; Veterans and Families want to be engaged in research.

- Knowledge, resources and actions must take diversity among the Veteran population into account.

Fardous Hosseiny, President and CEO of the Atlas Institute, said that while cannabis has potential as a tool to manage mental health conditions, more research needs to be conducted to explore the efficacy, impacts and best practices of cannabis as a treatment option for mental health conditions in Canada's Veteran population. "What emerged from this dialogue series is that this is a significant topic of interest. There is a need for more research, resources, and guidance not only for Veterans and Veteran Family members but for the service providers who work with them, so that collectively they can be best-informed in their decision making around the use of medical cannabis."

Mary Bartram, Policy Director at the Mental Health Commission of Canada, agreed that this project has shed light on the need for more nuanced research. "In order to honour the Veterans' and Veteran Family members' diverse experiences and help bridge the knowledge gaps between users and health care providers, we need to continue to advance evidence-based research hand in hand with the Veteran community."

For more information: atlasveterans.ca/cannabis-dialogues

ABOUT THE ATLAS INSTITUTE FOR VETERANS AND FAMILIES

The Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families works with Veterans, Families, service providers and researchers to bridge the divide between research and practice so Veterans and their Families can get the best possible mental health care and supports. The Atlas Institute was originally established as the Centre of Excellence on PTSD and Related Mental Health Conditions, through the Minister of Veterans Affairs November 2015 mandate letter, with funding and budget announced in the March 2017 federal budget.

ABOUT THE MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION OF CANADA

The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) leads the development and dissemination of innovative programs and tools to support the mental health and wellness of Canadians. Through its unique mandate from the Government of Canada, the MHCC supports federal, provincial, and territorial governments as well as organizations in the implementation of sound public policy. The MHCC has undertaken several initiatives to assess the impacts of cannabis use on mental health and inform future policy development. For more information on MHCC's work in cannabis and mental health, please visit our website.

CONTACT

Media Relations

Mental Health Commission of Canada

613-683-3748

media@mentalhealthcommission.ca

Media Relations
Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families
media-atlas@theroyal.ca

Joy Pavelich
Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families
+1 647-280-4145

[email us here](#)

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