

# Social Stigma and Affordability Top Barriers to Medical Cannabis Access

PHILADELPHIA,, PA, UNITED STATES, February 8, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A recent study surveyed 2,500 patients on their views of medical cannabis for pain, highlighting social stigma, cost, and lack of provider knowledge as key hurdles. The research offers valuable insights that could help break down these barriers and make medical cannabis a more accessible and effective pain management option.

The study, *Perspectives of Orthopedic Patients on Medical Cannabis: A Survey of More Than 2500 Patients*, is authored by researchers from the Rothman Orthopaedic Institute and organized by the Rothman Orthopaedic Institute Foundation for Opioid Research & Education in Philadelphia.

"Most respondents to our survey would consider using medical cannabis for chronic pain or other medical conditions. However, older patients were significantly less likely to believe that medical cannabis is safe to use or that it is safer than prescription opioids," says Asif Ilyas, MD, President of the Rothman Opioid Foundation and senior author of the study.

The survey results showed that most respondents were aware of the legal status of medical cannabis in their state, and 9 of 10 respondents believed that medical cannabis should be legal throughout the United States.

"Medical cannabis is legal in most states, and research continues to show its effectiveness in a variety of medical considerations, but our findings showed that the social stigma of using medical cannabis and the cost are barriers to its use," explained Ilyas. "Ninety-one percent of respondents believed that medical cannabis should be covered by medical insurance, although currently, it is not."

Respondents in the study indicated that other potential barriers to medical cannabis use included a lack of clarity on its best delivery method, concentrations, and ratios. These responses coincide with a major caveat to the medical use of cannabis, which is that there are no established evidence-based prescription guidelines for various medical conditions.

"Certification of medical cannabis gives patients legal access to it through dispensaries; however, patients often receive advice on its dosage, frequency, and routes of administration from unlicensed healthcare proxies. Our findings show the need for increased patient education on

using medical cannabis for various medical conditions," explained Ilyas.

Respondents in the study were generally unaware of the utility of medical cannabis for opioid use disorder, with only 1 of 4 respondents indicating that they would consider using it for opioid use disorder. Patients are generally willing to try medical cannabis; however, the cost of it and patient and medical provider knowledge about its use remain potential barriers. The study notes that another survey of primary care providers in a state where medical cannabis had already been legal for two years showed that 50% of providers either were not ready or did not want to answer patient questions about medical cannabis.

"To educate patients on medical cannabis, medical providers must first be well equipped with knowledge of its current evidence." says Ilyas. Moreover, the insights into current patient perspectives in the survey results can help improve the treatment of patients with these medications and guide future directions for intervention and research, notes Ilyas.

In addition to Dr. Ilyas, co-authors of the study were Clay B. Townsend, MD; Frederic Liss, MD; Charles Langman, DPM; Donald Mazur, MD; Stephen A. Stache, MD; Saloni Sharma, MD; David S. Stolzenberg, DO; Malathy Srinivasan, MD; David Pedowitz, MD; Surena Namdari, MD, MS; Mark L. Wang, MD, PhD; Ari C. Greis, DO.

The study appears in the Nov-Dec 2022 issue of Orthopedics. A copy is online here:

<https://journals.healio.com/doi/10.3928/01477447-20220907-05>

In addition to his role as President of the Rothman Opioid Foundation in Philadelphia, Ilyas is a Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery at Thomas Jefferson University and an Associate Dean of Clinical Research at the Drexel University College of Medicine in Pennsylvania.

About the Rothman Orthopaedic Institute Foundation for Opioid Research and Education.

The Rothman Orthopaedic Institute Foundation for Opioid Research & Education is a non-profit 501c3 organization dedicated to raising awareness of the risks and benefits of opioids, educating physicians and policymakers on safe opioid use, and supporting research and education aimed to advance innovative pain management strategies that can decrease opioid use. The Rothman Orthopaedic Institute Opioid Foundation supports and advances the highest quality research on opioids and alternative pain modalities to yield findings that can better inform patients, physicians, and the greater healthcare community in the most evidenced-based pain management strategies.

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