

How **MEDICAL CANNABIS** Is Helping Seniors Get Off Prescription Drugs

Lionheart Caregiving

“Talk to almost anybody over 65-years-old and there’s a list of medications that they’re taking. And very often, the side-effects from those medications are worse than the symptoms they’re supposedly treating,” says Steve DeAngelo of Harborside Health Center in Oakland, California.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) has a monopoly on the legal supply of marijuana for research purposes. Because NIDA is more focused on studying marijuana abuse than its potential benefits, researchers in the U.S. have difficulty getting cannabis to use in their studies. An exception is a research project initiated by the University of California in 2000. The Center for Medicinal Cannabis Research found that cannabis offers benefits to people suffering from pain as a result of many debilitating conditions.

Evidence that cannabis has medicinal value cannot be denied. As support, Dr. Sanjay Gupta, CNN’s chief medical correspondent, was a medical cannabis skeptic in a 2009 *TIME* magazine article called, “Why I Would Vote No on Pot.” After digging deeper into research conducted in other countries, Gupta changed his mind, saying, “We have been terribly and systematically misled for nearly 70 years in the United States, and I apologize for my role in that.”

Medical Cannabis for 5 Common Ailments

1) LOSS OF APPETITE & WEIGHT GAIN.

Patients with HIV/AIDS and weight loss found that those who took *dronabinol* (the principal psychoactive, therapeutic substance present in *Cannabis sativa*) increased appetite and stopped losing weight compared

with patients taking the placebo.



2) MUSCLE TENSION & SPASMS.

A study by the American Cancer Society showed that people with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) who used cannabis experienced a decrease in muscle spasms and shaking.

3) NAUSEA & VOMITING.

When coming into contact with cannabis, our body produces molecules (called endocannabinoids) that produce a euphoric state that helps to dull the senses to various symptoms, such as nausea. In trials conducted by the National Cancer Institute, two FDA-approved cannabis-based drugs, *dronabinol* and *nabilone*, helped to reduce chemotherapy-related nausea and vomiting.

4) PAIN. There has long been a belief that cannabis provides an analgesic quality to those suffering from chronic pain. Those suffering from neuropathic pain (commonly caused by alcoholism, amputation, spine surgery, HIV or MS) often turn to medicinal cannabis as a source of relief.

5) INSOMNIA & ANXIETY. Many use medicinal cannabis as a means to relieve anxiety and certain sleep disorders, such as insomnia. Studies testing the effectiveness of cannabis showed that subjects who inhaled marijuana had, “improved mood, improved sense of well-being, and less anxiety.” [National Cancer Institute]

At *Lionheart Caregiving in Bozeman*, we are well aware that cannabis is an effective treatment for a wide range of health problems, including many of the ailments that afflict the elderly. The problem, however, is that seniors tend to be uninformed or misinformed about cannabis. We can help. ■

How to Get a Montana Medical-Cannabis Card

1. A person must get a written recommendation from a doctor establishing a “qualifying condition” for using medical cannabis.
2. The applicant submits the doctor’s recommendation along with an application form of the provider and a \$75 fee to the state DPHHS. Patients under 18 must have a parent/guardian sign and act as the provider.
3. DPHHS/MMP processes the application and enters the patient into state’s PRIVATE REGISTRY. The registry is not available for public review.
4. DPHHS/MMP mails a medical-cannabis card to the patient, who can then begin using medical cannabis. The patient is allowed to possess no more than one ounce of usable cannabis. The card is renewed annually.