

MEDICAL MARIJUANA—IS IT RIGHT FOR YOU?

Iona Health and Wellness uses an integrative approach to medicine. They offer age management medicine for women and men to optimize health. Dr. Sonn will evaluate you and tailor a patient-specific treatment plan to maximize your potential. Using evidence-based medicine, their diagnostic and treatment services are directed towards promoting health. Gregory Sonn, DO has been practicing Medicine since 2002; he believes that each patient is unique, requiring his or her own treatment that is different from anyone else's medical care.

In addition to Health and Wellness, Dr. Sonn's practice utilizes medical marijuana to treat illnesses and also as a palliative care therapy for end-of-life or chronically ill patients.

We caught up with Dr. Sonn to ask him a few detailed questions that so many of our readers have about medical marijuana.

Q: After many years of Integrative Medicine and Palliative Care, what made you decide to become a specialized Marijuana physician and add medical marijuana to your practice?

A: I've been doing palliative care for the past 15 years now. I started in primary care and realized that my elderly patients were often underserved. In addition to this, I added a health and wellness subspecialty to my practice to help our community ward off diseases and terminal illness by living a healthy lifestyle and being proactive in their preventative care. The health and wellness side of my practice is full of natural supplements, substances, and nutritionally targeted programs.

I added medical marijuana to my clinic because after Amendment 2 was gaining so much positive feedback in the polls, I was elated that I would finally be able to get involved and become a certified prescriber to offer my patients the unique array of benefits that medical marijuana offers.

Q: For palliative treatment, what are you noticing about the outcome or results when patients receive medical marijuana treatment?

A: My very first medical marijuana patient was a female with stage 4 pancreatic cancer. She was 84 years old when I first treated her, being a California transplant, she was well-versed in cannabis as treatment. Before adding marijuana to my practice, I had done years of studying up on the effect of cannabis for specific disorders and diseases, and this patient took notice of my expertise. She was pleased that I knew as much, if not more than her doctors in California. Consequently, she is still thriving and fighting her disease.

All of my patient population is very well represented. I take pride in being as knowledgeable as possible and through this, my patients are seeing excellent results in reducing pain, anxiety and countless other side effects directly related to their diagnosis.

Medical Marijuana is different for every patient, and it's unique to various disease states. In regards to cancer patients, those folks see significant benefits in decreasing pain and opiate demands. It's expected that it reduces opiate consumption by a third.



For those patients undergoing chemotherapy, it is helping to calm their side effects like nausea, vomiting, and significantly reduces any GI distress caused by chemotherapy. It soothes the body and mind, allowing for internal and emotional healing during a very stressful time.

We are seeing impressive results with several patients that want to use medical marijuana as an aggressive cancer and antitumor treatment. So in these cases, it's beyond palliative, as we are literally seeing positive effects on their illnesses on an entirely different level.

Q: What is the difference between medical marijuana and the street form of the drug?

A: There is no actual "whole green flower" in the state of Florida. Here, the highly regulated products are "green flower" that has been heated through convection (no burning) and usually put into vaporized capsules, sublingual tablets, oils, tinctures or other means for the patient's convenience. There are different levels of medical marijuana, some with higher TCH, some with very low TCH depending on the disease being treated.

In Florida, we have vertical medical marijuana treatment centers (MMTC), or dispensaries. This means the same company that clones the plants is responsible for putting the product into your hands. It's highly controlled and runs very efficiently.

Q: There is currently a list of treatable medical conditions that are approved by the Florida Marijuana Law, how can a patient be considered for an alternative disorder or disease?

A: It's crucial for patients to seek out a highly qualified and adept physician. Physicians like myself have spent a considerable amount of time researching and learning the ins and outs of using medical marijuana to treat disease states, and also as a palliative care therapy. Having the right doctor will make the difference as to whether or not your condition gets approved if it's not already on the list.

Q: Under the Compassionate Use Law, How long does a patient have to wait to receive marijuana from the dispensary?

A: There is no longer a 90-day waiting period, but under the Florida Department Of Health, it may take a few months to get your first order filled. We see more patients than any other clinic in Lee County because we are not only the experts on the benefits, but we're also well versed in navigating through the process to help our patient's application process run smoothly. We assist our patients in getting their application off the same day as their initial consultation. There is some leg work that we

request they do before seeing us. Some of those things include getting a professional passport picture, making sure their address matches their driver's license and providing them with a preprinted envelope to mail their application.

We also have patient educators on hand to handle most questions. No matter how general or specific, if my educators can't answer more in depth questions, for example specific drug interactions, then those are referred to me directly.

Q: Why did you decide to add Telemedicine to your practice?

A: Inevitably, folks who enter into our exclusive VIP program benefit from a direct primary care service that we offer. We utilize the telemedicine for our patient's convenience. If they are too sick to leave their home from a cough & cold, we can treat them via the telemedicine option. It's at no additional cost to our VIP patients, but it is available for a nominal fee of \$25 for the general patient as well. Telemedicine is the wave of the future, and we like to stay up-to-date of all cutting-edge technology. We are also able to treat our established medical marijuana patients via telemedicine for their convenience.

Q: Why should patients come to you?

A: I meet people where they are at in their health and their healthcare needs. I take the time to talk with them, find out their history, their concerns, their motives, and I answer them honestly. I like to say that I partner with my patients to discuss all of their options regarding their comfort levels, death and disease, and any treatment or modifications needed. I take an advanced directive approach to helping them better understand their entire situation and how I can be there for them through it all.

Medical Marijuana Qualifying Conditions:

- Cancer
- Epilepsy
- Glaucoma
- HIV
- AIDS
- Seizures
- Chronic Pain
- Crohn's disease
- Chronic muscle spasms
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS)
- Parkinson's disease
- Multiple sclerosis
- Any other medical condition that the doctor approves



To find out more about Dr. Sonn and his practice, please visit IonaCannabisClinic.com or call (239) 689-6819

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