

Talking Ethics



Cannabis Conversations: Your Ethical Obligations

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Do you have any personal biases against the recreational or medicinal use of cannabis that would interfere with your professional responsibilities? Our life experiences and worldview inform our opinions and create bias. Yet, as regulated oral health care professionals, our obligation is to provide relevant, objective information from credible sources when communicating with clients, groups, and communities. We must always seek out appropriate, professional resources to acquire new knowledge and enhance our health promotion efforts.

On October 17, 2018, the federal Cannabis Act came into force to regulate recreational and medicinal cannabis use. Since the provinces and territories are responsible for developing, implementing, maintaining, and enforcing systems to oversee the distribution and sale of cannabis, it is important to stay up to date on the local laws.¹⁻³

Ethically speaking, in the context of communicating with clients, groups, and communities about the oral implications of cannabis use, CDHA's *Dental Hygienists' Code of Ethics* articulates the professional responsibilities of dental hygienists under the principles of "autonomy" and "integrity." Specifically, dental hygienists help clients to make informed choices and to participate in achieving and maintaining optimal oral health by "communicating relevant information openly and truthfully"⁴ (autonomy). In addition, dental hygienists "maintain and advance their knowledge and skills in dental hygiene through lifelong learning"⁴ (integrity).

How can we determine which resources are directly relevant to our professional obligations and streamline our learning? The DH25 dental hygiene students at the Canadian National Institute of Health have curated a collection of 12 relevant and credible resources to assist you. These cannabis resources are found on Canadian regulatory authority websites, as well as government and professional association websites; many are authored by dental hygienists. The curated collection includes the cannabis monograph, fact sheets, posters, handouts, articles, and a webinar. All resources have been published between 2017 and 2019.

CURATED CANNABIS RESOURCES

Title: Cannabasics

Format: Set of 10 fact sheets

Summary: The Canadian Public Health Association has published a set of 10 fact sheets for use by health and social service providers. Overview of common cannabis plants, products, methods of consumption, reasons for consumption, information to reduce harm, and information about cannabis use disorder, harm reduction methods. Resources include links to additional sites.



Source: Canadian Public Health Association. Cannabasics [Fact sheets]. Ottawa: CPHA; 2018. Available from: www.cpha.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/resources/cannabis/cannabasics-2018-fact-sheets-e.pdf

Title: Cannabis

Format: Canadian Pharmacists Association monograph



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Summary: The CPhA monograph is available to CDHA members as part of the CPS on the RxTx Mobile App suite. CDHA members access this monograph by signing in with their e-CPS username and password, then entering the URL.

Source: Canadian Pharmacists Association. Cannabis. Ottawa: CPhA; 2018. Available from: www.e-therapeutics.ca/print/new/documents/MONOGRAPH/en/cannabis

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▲ DH25 dental hygiene students at CNIH, L to R: Kailee Byers, Kavitha Shamanna, Dharmvir Singh, Manhong Guo, Reshma Sebastian, Rachelle Gorospe, Sheryl De Leon, Brittini Smithson, Instructor Kathleen Feres Patry, Alexis Smith, Courtney Spencer, Taylor McSheffery, Meagann Hareuther, Megan Hunt, Michelle Griffiths, Keena Moham, Tessa Fudge, Steve Paul. Missing from the photo: Jenna Baldree, Kathleen Chadwick, Sydney Guillaume.

Title: Cannabis in Canada

Format: Webinar produced by the Canadian Dental Hygienists Association

Summary: Synopsis of the legislation governing the use of cannabis, how the endocannabinoid system works, oral signs and symptoms of cannabis use, and oral health recommendations to consider.

Source: Reynolds B. Cannabis in Canada [Webinar]. Ottawa: Canadian Dental Hygienists Association; 2019. Available from www.cdha.ca/availablewebinars



Title: Cannabis legalization and oral health – What dental hygienists need to know

Format: College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario Milestones article

Summary: Synthesis of pharmacology, general health effects, oral adverse effects, signs and symptoms that may affect dental hygiene care and examples of health history questions useful to determine client risk.

Source: Anastasopoulos R. Cannabis legalization and oral health – What dental hygienists need to know [Internet]. Toronto: College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario; 2018. pp. 8-11. Available from: www.cdho.org/docs/default-source/pdfs/milestones/milestones_201803.pdf





Title: Cannabis legalization and regulation

Format: Website of the Federal Department of Justice

Summary: Synthesis of the federal Cannabis Act S.C. 2018, c.16

Source: Government of Canada. Cannabis legalization and regulation [Internet]. Ottawa: Department of Justice; 2018. Available from: www.justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-jp/cannabis/



Title: Front & Centre: Tobacco cessation in the era of e-cigarettes and legalized cannabis

Format: College of Registered Dental Hygienists of Alberta *InTouch* article

Summary: Scholarly presentation of the federal and Alberta smoking cessation strategies and the current statistics of use; contribution of tobacco and cannabis to the development of oral disease; the role of dental health professionals in tobacco cessation including “the Adapted 5 A-Approach” (Els, 2019, p.14), and concrete recommendations for dental professionals to implement in their practice.

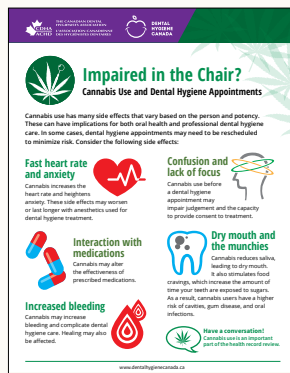
Source: Els C. Tobacco cessation in the era of e-cigarettes and legalized cannabis. [Internet]. Edmonton: College of Registered Dental Hygienists of Alberta; 2019. pp. 12-15. Available from www.crdha.ca/media/249526/intouchwinter_2019-web.pdf



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Title: Impaired in the chair? Cannabis and dental hygiene appointments

Format: Poster

Summary: Factors to consider when treating clients who use cannabis for recreational or medicinal purposes.

Source: Canadian Dental Hygienists Association. Impaired in the chair? Cannabis and dental hygiene appointments [Poster]. Ottawa: CDHA; 2018. Available from: www.dentalhygienecanada.ca/pdfs/OralCare/Cannabis_In_the_Chair_EN_FINAL.pdf



Title: Impaired in the chair? Cannabis and the dental hygiene process of care.

Format: CDHA *Oh Canada!* article

Summary: Factors to consider when treating clients who use cannabis for recreational or medicinal purposes. Includes recommended reading.

Source: Martin M. Impaired in the chair? Cannabis and the dental hygiene process of care. *Oh Canada!* 2018 (Fall/Winter):21-22. Available from: www.cdha.ca/CDHA/TheProfession/OhCanada/links/OHC_winter_2018.aspx?ohcanada.pdf



Title: Why is my dental hygienist asking about my Cannabis use?

Format: Poster

Summary: This information sheet is published for the public by the College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario to help clients understand why dental hygienists are asking about their cannabis use.

Source: College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario. Why is my dental hygienist asking about my cannabis use? [Internet]. Toronto: CDHO; 2018. Available from: www.cdho.org/docs/default-source/pdfs/oral-health-rpt/why-is-my-dh-cannabis-use-poster.pdf?sfvrsn=95199ca0_18

Title: Root of the matter: Upcoming regulation changes – Legalization of non-medical cannabis.

Format: Access article published by the College of Dental Hygienists of British Columbia

Summary: Highlight the registrant's responsibilities.

Source: Guyader J, Hastings B. Root of the matter: Upcoming regulation changes – Legalization of non-medical cannabis [Internet]. Victoria: College of Dental Hygienists of British Columbia; 2018. Available from www.cdhibc.com/Documents/Fed-Gov-legislation-of-non-medical-Cannabis.aspx



Title: Why is my dental hygienist asking about my Cannabis use?

Format: Handout

Summary: This information sheet is published for the public by the College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario to help clients understand why dental hygienists are asking about their cannabis use.

Source: College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario. Why is my dental hygienist asking about my cannabis use? [Internet]. Toronto: CDHO; 2018. Available from: www.cdho.org/docs/default-source/pdfs/oral-health-rpt/why-is-my-dh-cannabis-use-handout.pdf?sfvrsn=8e199ca0_12



HONOURABLE MENTION:



Title: #TheBluntTruth – useful tips about safer ways to use cannabis

Format: Pocket-sized guide produced by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

Summary: The health promotion guide was developed for and by young people and provides science-based facts on cannabis and ten recommendations to reduce the risks of youth consumption.

The pocket-guide pamphlet is available for purchase at <https://store-camh.myshopify.com/products/p6514-p6515>

Source: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. #TheBluntTruth – useful tips about safer ways to use cannabis [Internet]. Toronto: CAMH; 2018. Available from: www.camh.ca/-/media/images/all-other-images/research-lrcug-for-youth/lrcug_for_youth-eng-pdf.pdf?la=en&hash=15D9E4FBB8DBA73B665C3267E64FE233F937A298

CONCLUSION

Dental hygienists have many ethical obligations to clients, groups, communities, the profession, and to themselves. We anticipate that this curated collection of cannabis resources will serve your current knowledge needs and allow you to uphold the principles of integrity and autonomy insofar as conversations about cannabis in your practice are concerned.

The federal and provincial regulations are evolving and will change. In response, the profession will evolve as well. The College of Registered Dental Hygienists of Alberta⁵ already has a plan to gather information on cannabis in five distinct areas:

1. Fitness to practise of the registrants
2. Workplace policies and procedures to protect public safety
3. Standards of practice and ethical codes that ensure an informed consent from the client is obtained. Informed consent cannot be given by persons who are high on cannabis, alcohol or other drugs
4. Effects of cannabis on oral health and overall health, understanding the medical science behind any impacts of cannabis products, including cannabinoids
5. Use of cannabis products, such as oils, in dental or dental hygiene treatment or for home use by clients.⁵

We agree that there is plenty of research to be done!

References

1. Government of Canada. Cannabis legalization and regulation. Ottawa: Minister of Justice; 2018. Available from: www.justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-jp/cannabis/
2. Government of Canada. Cannabis in the provinces and territories. Ottawa: Author; 2018. Available from: www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-medication/cannabis/laws-regulations/provinces-territories.html
3. Reynolds B. Cannabis in Canada [Webinar]. Ottawa: Canadian Dental Hygienists Association; 2019. Available from: www.cdha.ca/availablewebinars
4. Canadian Dental Hygienists Association. Dental hygienists' code of ethics. Ottawa: Author; 2012. pp. 6–7.
5. College of Registered Dental Hygienists of Alberta. InTouch Message from the Editor [Internet]. Edmonton: Author; 2019. p.1. Available from: www.crdha.ca/media/249526/intouchwinter_2019-web.pdf