

MLUWC General Meeting - February 8, 2016

Dr. Mark Ware

Director of Clinical Research, Alan Edwards Pain Management Unit and
Associate Professor, Faculty of Medicine, McGill University

Medical Cannabis: from Plant to Patient

Dr. Ware has been researching the use of medical cannabis as a potential pain medication for about 15 years. He received his first grant in Canada in late 1999/early 2000 to study cannabis as a potential pain medication. Dr. Ware mentioned that no new pain medication has been developed in many years and that there have only been modifications to existing ones.

Dr. Ware described the complexity of researching the cannabis plant since there is a very wide range of compounds found within the plant. Some produce the “high” usually associated with marijuana but many others have no euphoric effect and have been shown to be instrumental in treating epilepsy, especially in children, as an example.

The family of cannabis compounds can be used in the treatment of a large number of ailments, and the medical and pharmaceutical professions are just starting to understand how they can affect people. There was a study on the use of cannabis as a pain medication which showed that the side effects are similar to those experienced by users of other mainstream pain medicines. There are still many gaps in our knowledge of cannabis and only a few research studies underway. Dr. Ware commented that cannabinoid compounds may very well be the future of pain medication.

In May 2015, the Research Institute of the McGill University Health Centre and the Canadian Consortium for the Investigation of Cannabinoids launched a registry for users of medical cannabis in Quebec that will allow physicians to better manage its use and monitor patient safety. This innovative project represents the world’s first research database on the use of cannabis for medical purposes and places Quebec at the forefront of research in the field of medical cannabis. The registry was launched in response to a call by the Collège des médecins du Québec (CMQ) for guidelines on the use of medical cannabis in accordance with new government regulations. As of April 1, 2014, cannabis can only be prescribed “within a research framework,” as it is not a medically recognized treatment.

For more information on the research and therapeutic applications of cannabis, go to www.ccic.net.