

Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection

Medical Marijuana Program

Board of Physicians

Minutes

March 11, 2015

Members Present: Michelle Seagull Deputy Commissioner
Dr. Vincent Carlesi
Dr. Jonathan Kost
Dr. Godfrey Pearlson
Dr. Deepak Cyril D'Souza (Skype)

DCP Staff Present: Elisa Nahas Director, Legal Division
Claudette Carveth Director, Communication Office
Gary Berner Legislative Program Director
Xaviel Soto Health Program Supervisor
Marguerite Poisson License and Applications Analyst

Call to Order

Commissioner Harris called the meeting to order of the Board of Physicians for Connecticut's Medical Marijuana Program at 8:50 A.M. at the Department of Consumer Protection, 165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, room 126.

Review and Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes

After one correction was made to the draft minutes, on a motion made by Deputy Commissioner Seagull and unanimously voted, the draft minutes of the January 14, 2014 meeting are accepted.

Status Report on Program Implementation

Currently, there are approximately 3,000 patients who have approved registrations. There are approximately 187 physicians currently participating in the program. At the previous meeting, the Board recommended the addition of three conditions to the list of debilitating conditions. The Commissioner of Consumer Protection accepted the Board's recommendations and they are currently going through the process of being added to the regulations. These changes to the regulations are expected to be completed this year.

With advancement of the program, there is a new bill being presented that could result in changes to the statutes relating to medical marijuana. Some key points of this bill include:

- licensure of laboratories that are testing medical marijuana
- ability to approve and oversee research programs, which would allow us to license employees and provide immunity (under state law) to institutions that want to engage in research
- provide immunity (under state law) to nurses who may administer medical marijuana to their patients
- allow licensed dispensaries to begin selling and transporting marijuana to the licensed healthcare facilities or licensed producers to begin selling and transporting marijuana to the licensed laboratories
- will expand the definition of qualifying patients
- will ease restrictions on Board Members qualifications by not limiting physicians to be in specific specialties

Dr. D'Souza posed a question in response to the idea of potential immunities with this bill, asking about how the state would handle driving and marijuana. Deputy Commissioner Seagull responded by stating it would be a concern for those who enforce driving laws similar to any other medication that has potential to cause impairment.

Discussion on criteria for board members to consider when reviewing Petitions to Add Debilitating Conditions

Deputy Commissioner Seagull prompted discussion by the Board Members as to what factors are most relevant or persuasive when considering Petitions to Add Debilitating Medical Conditions. This information would be helpful to help the discussions between Board Members, as well as for the public when they submit a petition.

The Board Members had this discussion to examine what standards of evidence the Board would use to approve conditions. They discussed the two extremes of the evidence spectrum being the gold standard randomized double blind placebo controlled trials (what the USFDA uses to approve medications) versus testimony from patients who have used marijuana. Some Board Members felt having the same criteria used to review all petitions would help them in the future to justify their rationale for supporting or opposing a petition. However, it was noted that there is uniqueness to this situation with the ability to do any studies being controlled by a condition needing to be an approved diagnosis. It was noted that the Board members need to accept patient testimonials and letters or testimonials from specialized physicians. Also, there will need to be a collaboration of modalities of assessments looked at rather than just controlled trials. It was also mentioned that things such as animal models should also be taken into consideration. One suggestion was rather than approve petitions because there are no studies, the State of Connecticut should provide resources for these studies to take place. While comparing the previously reviewed petitions, it was noted that Tourette's Disorder had significantly fewer studies associated with it than the other conditions did. It was suggested that there should be a checklist of criteria to take into consideration to include: are there any double blind placebo controlled trials, open clinical trials, etc. The list could evaluate studies from the gold standard to least controlled studies and rate each. The Board Members were interested in the proposed bill that would allow research studies to be conducted, as they may in the future aid in deciding what conditions should be added the list of debilitating medical conditions.

After receiving e-mails from concerned physicians about patients with specific mental health issues receiving medical marijuana cards and having psychiatric emergencies, it was suggested to have a type of surveillance program to monitor negative outcomes and safety issues, as well as positive outcomes from treatment. Also, the Board Members thought patients being improperly diagnosed may be a problem, and they felt better screening tools should be developed.

Public Hearings on Petitions to Add Debilitating Medical Conditions

- Public hearing testimony and comments focused on the following:
 - Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis
 - Testimony from Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis patient
 - Testimony from James Vangeelen, dispensary facility employee
 - Fabry Disease
 - Testimony from Fabry Disease patient
 - Ulcerative Colitis
 - Testimony from James Vangeelen, dispensary facility employee
 - Testimony from Ulcerative Colitis patient

Discussion and Vote on Petitions to Add Debilitating Medical Conditions

- The Board Members decided to defer their votes until the next meeting after receiving new supporting documents for petitions being considered, as these documents need proper review by all Board Members. Also, the Board Members want to continue to discuss possible guidelines they can adopt to aid in their review of petitions.

Written testimony for these conditions will be accepted through March 25, 2015.

Adjournment

Deputy Commissioner Seagull adjourned the meeting at approximately 10:08 A.M.

Next Meeting

Scheduled for Wednesday, April 15, 2015 at 8:30 A.M., room 126.