



## Why Medical Marijuana is Critical to the Evolution of the Cannabis Industry

*More than half of the adult population in the U.S. now has access to legal cannabis, and it is estimated that more than 500,000 patients may potentially benefit from medical marijuana treatments.*

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**Guest post by Dr. Bryan Doner, Co-Founder of Compassionate Certification Centers**

The integration of medical cannabis into our healthcare system is a tremendous accomplishment, especially considering this was initiated by a patient centered movement.

Though the recreational market garners a lot of the spotlight, the medical side of the industry has been a critical component of the entire industry's evolution, and will continue to do so in the future. Recent research from New Frontier has projected that the U.S. medical marijuana market will reach \$11 billion in 2020. Further estimates reveal that states like Ohio, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, are going to be key players in the industry.

Florida's market alone is expected to reach \$1.6 billion by 2020, making it half the size of California's projected \$2.6 billion market and above Colorado's projected \$1.5 billion medical marijuana market. From a research and clinical integration standpoint, we have only scratched the surface of medical cannabis as an entity. It very well may be one of the most important developments in the history of modern medicine, and time will tell. Its importance to the acceptance, integration and expansion of the cannabis industry cannot be underestimated.

These numbers are astounding and yet what is even more astounding is the lack of resources available to healthcare providers, who are a critical cog in the wheel. Medical marijuana is applicable to anyone who is involved in patient care, yet until recently, resources have been difficult to find and only initiated on a small scale. As a physician and medical marijuana advocate, I have noticed that despite the overwhelming amount of directories and educational platforms for patients, there is a surprisingly small amount of resources for those on the other end of the spectrum – physicians, nurses, clinicians, etc.

For the legal cannabis industry to progress and move forward we need to educate providers and work towards integrating medical marijuana into mainstream medicine. Now that 28 states have passed legalization measures, it is imperative that all physicians and providers have a baseline understanding of the endocannabinoid system and medical marijuana. Not only of the science, but also how the system in our country works, which differs state-by-state and is far from traditional. They also, like patients, need to be provided with the ongoing support and tools to make integration effective and safe.

Those of us who are physicians and providers have an obligation to understand the treatment options that are available today. Whether we believe in it or not, we still need to educate ourselves on the current research and have a basic understanding of the endocannabinoid system, because in the end, what we do is ultimately for our patients.

Though we have a long way to go, there are some resources available for providers interested in learning more about the benefits of medical marijuana, and even how to expand their practice to include medical marijuana. Organizations such as Compassionate Certification Centers, The Answer Page, the American Association of Medical Cannabis, Americans for Safe Access, among others have dedicated programs to helping physicians and health care providers become educated and understand medical cannabis more thoroughly.

In order for the industry to truly succeed, both healthcare providers and cannabis industry leaders need to be open to establishing a more inclusive and progressive U.S. healthcare dialogue. In my opinion, this includes DEA consideration of removing “marihuana” from the Schedule I listing. People ask me all the time what will happen when “marijuana is legal recreationally in your state.” To this, my answer is “nothing will change at all.” The potential medical benefits of cannabinoids are just starting to be clearly understood, and as time moves on, our understanding and knowledge will only increase. This ensures that medical marijuana will play a critical role in the long term viability and expansion of the legal cannabis industry.

About the Author:

Dr. Bryan Doner is the CEO Medical Director and Co-Founder of Compassionate Certification Centers™, a medical marijuana marketing and consulting company that offers the educational resources, guidance, and leadership, needed to service providers and patients in states where medical marijuana is legal, as well as states with pending legislation.

Dr. Doner received his undergraduate education at Denison University and completed a graduate program in Medical Sciences at the University of Massachusetts at Boston. He then completed his medical education at the Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine, immediately followed by residency training in Emergency Medicine at Saint Vincent Health System (Erie, PA).

He is a member of the American Academy of Cannabinoid Medicine, American’s for Safe Access, and the Society of Cannabis Clinicians.

Dr. Doner currently practices clinically in multiple states, and has active medical licenses in Pennsylvania, Ohio and New York. He is currently certified to attest for medical marijuana in New York, and soon Pennsylvania and Ohio. He has attended numerous symposiums and educational events regarding medical marijuana and research, oftentimes serving as a speaker or panel member. As an advocate for Medical Marijuana and as a clinical researcher, Dr. Doner is especially interested in future research within this industry.