Fact Sheet

Approvals to prescribe medicinal cannabis in South Australia

Cannabis for medical use is regulated as a medicine in Australia. Medical practitioners can legally prescribe medicinal cannabis products subject to both Commonwealth and State regulatory requirements.

1. Commonwealth requirements to supply an unregistered medicinal cannabis product.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) provides a number of ways in which patients can access medicinal cannabis products that are not registered for use in Australia.

Doctors may apply to, or notify the TGA of the use of an unregistered medicinal cannabis product under the following schemes

- Special Access Scheme, or
- Authorised Prescriber Scheme, or
- Clinical Trial Schemes

Until medicinal cannabis products are registered medicines in Australia, Commonwealth approval or notification will continue to be necessary.

The treating medical practitioner will need to identify an appropriate medicinal cannabis product considering the evidence for use, dosing regimen and formulation.

For more information about Commonwealth requirements for prescribing unregistered medicinal cannabis products, doctors can contact the TGA.

Web: tga.gov.au
Phone: 1800 020 653

Approval from the Commonwealth Office of Drug Control (ODC) may also be required to import an unregistered medicinal cannabis product from overseas.

Web: odc.gov.au
Phone: 02 6232 8740

2. South Australian requirements to prescribe Schedule 8 medicinal cannabis in South Australia

Existing South Australian Controlled Substances legislation that regulates the prescribing and supply of Schedule 8 medicines in South Australia applies to Schedule 8 medicinal cannabis drugs, including exemptions.

To obtain State approval (a section 18A authority granted for purposes of the Controlled Substances Act 1984) to prescribe a Schedule 8 medicinal cannabis product, medical practitioners can apply to the Drugs of Dependence Unit (DDU), SA Health.
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A section 18A authority is only required after 2 months of treatment, or before commencing treatment where the person is already prescribed a Schedule 8 drug (for a period exceeding 2 months), and for any person the medical practitioner reasonably believes to be dependent on drugs.

A section 18A authority is not required for patients:

> aged 70 years or older
> who are Notified Palliative Care Patients (notification to the DDU is required)
> who are not drug dependent, for regular use for a period of less than 2 months.

The conditions for which medicinal cannabis might be considered will likely be complex medical conditions and as such, prescribing of medicinal cannabis is restricted in South Australia to specialist medical practitioners with expertise in the management of the disease being treated. In certain circumstances, authority may be granted to a general practitioner where written support for treatment is provided by the patient’s treating specialist.

Applications for authority to prescribe Schedule 8 medicinal cannabis products may be referred to an expert clinical panel within SA Health for advice on a case by case basis.

For information about Controlled Substances legislation as it applies to patients receiving treatment in a hospital or correctional institution, health practitioners should contact the Drugs of Dependence Unit.

For more information about requirements under South Australian Controlled Substances legislation, doctors can contact the Drugs of Dependence Unit

| Web: sahealth.sa.gov.au/drugsofdependence |
| Email: HealthDrugsofDependenceUnit@sa.gov.au |
| Phone: 1300 652 584 |

Application form to prescribe medicinal cannabis

Cannabidiol

One cannabis derivative, cannabidiol in preparations for therapeutic use containing 2% or less of other cannabinoids found in cannabis, is a Schedule 4 medicine.

This means the total cannabinoids in the product must be at least 98% cannabidiol to be in Schedule 4. Supply of Schedule 4 cannabidiol medicines requires a prescription from a medical practitioner, and Commonwealth approval or notification.

An authority for purposes of South Australian Controlled Substances legislation is not required to prescribe Schedule 4 cannabidiol medicines.

For more information

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