New Hampshire
Therapeutic Cannabis Medical Oversight Board

Annual Report 2020

Membership[1]

Jonathan Ballard, MD, Medical Director, NH Department of Health and Human Services
Virginia Brack, MD, Pediatrics
Heather Brown, Qualifying Patient
Corey Burchman. Alternative Treatment Center Clinical Representative (Prime ATC)
Bert Fichman, MD, Palliative Care
Jerry Knirk, MD, Physiatry/Orthopedics
Richard Morse, MD, Neurology
Molly Rossignol, DO, Family/Internal Medicine
Seddon Savage, MD, Addiction
Cornel Stanciu, MD, Psychiatry
Lisa Withrow, APRN, FNP-C, ACHPN, Oncology

Charge

The Board's charge, pursuant to RSA 126-X:12, IV, is to "monitor and contribute to the oversight of the clinical, quality, and public health related matters of therapeutic cannabis under this chapter by:

(a) Reviewing medical and scientific evidence pertaining to currently approved and additional qualifying conditions.

(b) Reviewing laboratory results of required testing of cannabis cultivated and/or processed by an alternative treatment center and the use of pesticides on products under RSA 126-X:6, III(a)(16).

(c) Monitoring clinical outcomes.

(d) Reviewing training protocols for dispensary staff based on models from other states.

(e) Receiving updates from alternative treatment centers on effectiveness of various strains, types of cannabinoids, and different routes of administration for specific conditions.

(f) Reviewing best practices for medical providers regarding provider education, certification of patients, and patient access to the program.

(g) Reviewing any other clinical, quality, and public health related matter relative to use of cannabis under this chapter."

In addition, the Board may make recommendations to the Commissioner of DHHS to add or remove qualifying medical conditions under RSA 126-X:1, IX, based on its findings and after receiving input from the public through a public hearing process.

Lastly, the Board shall make an annual report to the president of the senate, the speaker of the house of representatives, the oversight committee on health and human services established under RSA 126-A:13, the board of medicine, the board of nursing, and the therapeutic use of cannabis advisory council established under RSA 126-X:9.

[1] Current members. David Conway, MD (Obstetrics and Gynecology) and Dennis Thapa, MD (Pain Management) also served in 2020.

Meeting Dates

The Therapeutic Cannabis Medical Oversight Board (TCMOB; Board) convened nine times, at the offices of DHHS and remotely via Zoom (due to COVID-19 pandemic). Meetings were noticed on a webpage maintained by DHHS, https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/oos/tcp/mob.htm, and meeting minutes were posted at the same webpage

2020 Workplan

At its January meeting, the Board set its priorities for 2020.

Priority 1: Review Evidence for Proposed Qualifying Medical Conditions

Goal: Ensure that all recommendations for qualifying conditions are based upon the best available science, clinical evidence, and public input.

Strategy: Provide recommendations to NH General Court regarding bills that would add or remove qualifying conditions for the therapeutic use of cannabis.

Activities:

1. In response to SB700, held a public hearing for the addition of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) as a qualifying condition for the Therapeutic Cannabis Program (TCP).
2. Reviewed available evidence and public testimony for the use of therapeutic cannabis for ASD.
3. Provided a consensus recommendation to the NH General Court regarding the addition of ASD a qualifying condition.

At its March meeting, the Board voted to recommend adding ASD as a qualifying condition for the therapeutic use of cannabis, as follows:

1. ASD as a qualifying medical condition in adults 21 years old or older; and
2. ASD as a qualifying medical condition in persons under 21 years old, with a requirement for consultation with a provider of child and/or adolescent psychology, developmental pediatrics, or pediatric neurology who (1) confirms that the condition has not responded to previously prescribed medication or for which other treatment options produced serious side effects and (2) supports certification for the use of therapeutic cannabis.

Priority 2: Review Best Practices, Education, and Training for Medical Providers

Goal: Provide medical providers with the best available evidence and practices to support patients in shared decision-making.

Strategies:

1. Improve access to programmatic and administrative information about the NH Therapeutic Cannabis Program.
2. Share educational resources about the potential risks and benefits of cannabis.
3. Share best practices for management of qualifying patients using therapeutic cannabis.

Activities:

1. Identified the TCMOB webpage, hosted by DHHS, to be a repository of information for medical providers about therapeutic cannabis and the TCP.
2. Identified, reviewed, and approved on-line introductory therapeutic cannabis educational programs which grant CME credits, and provided annotations as to any strengths, weaknesses, or biases.

3. Identified TCMOB-vetted on-line references for in-depth exploration of specific concerns or indications.
4. Developed recommendations and educational materials for healthcare providers and patients about the potential risks of cannabis use during pregnancy or while breastfeeding.
5. Prepared a "TCP 101" slide deck for healthcare providers that offers an overview of therapeutic cannabis and the TCP including:
    a. NH TCP overview
    b. Basics of cannabis
    c. The patient certification process, including qualifying medical conditions, provider requirements, and the patient registration process
    d. Best practice clinical guidelines for certifying providers, including patient selection, screening, and evaluation, informed consent, and follow-up.
    e. The role of the Alternative Treatment Centers (ATCs)
    f. Special populations, including adolescents, women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, and those with opioid use disorder.
    g. Additional education resources

Note: the content described above is either completed, or nearing final completion and approval by the Board. It is expected that all content will be made available on the TCMOB website in early 2021.

Other Activities and Notes

At its October meeting, the Board met with the Interim Executive Director of the New Hampshire Office of Professional Licensure and Certification (OPLC) to discuss issues about cannabis certification and the NH medical practice acts, including issues of cannabis practice supervision and licensing, clinical best practices, and administrative roles of DHHS (administering the program), OPLC (licensing of certifying providers), and TCMOB (developing and recommending standard of care or best practices for cannabis certification and clinical management). These considerations will be discussed further in 2021.

A small group of TCMOB members will be presenting a panel discussion at the New Hampshire Behavioral Health Summit, in December 2020, regarding cannabis use in women of childbearing age.

TCMOB has had some member vacancies in 2020, which have been difficult to address due to the priorities of COVID-19.

Looking Ahead to 2021

The Board expects that its focus in 2021 will be to finalize and make public its educational materials, and update those materials as needed, to continue its development and refinement of clinical best practices for cannabis certification, to be responsive to bills in the NH Legislature which propose to add or remove qualifying medical conditions, and to review current qualifying medical conditions and symptoms already established in statute.