New Hampshire
Therapeutic Cannabis Medical Oversight Board
Annual Report 2021

Membership[1]

Jonathan Ballard, MD, Medical Director, NH Department of Health and Human Services
Virginia Brack, MD, Pediatrics
Heather Brown, Qualifying Patient
Corey Burchman, MD, Alternative Treatment Center Clinical Representative (Prime ATC)
Jerry Knirk, MD, Physiatry/Orthopedics
Jill MacGregor, Family/Internal Medicine
Richard Morse, MD, Neurology
Molly Rossignol, DO, Addiction
Seddon Savage, MD, Pain Management
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] Two vacancies in 2021, representing palliative care and obstetrics and gynecology.

Meeting Dates

The Therapeutic Cannabis Medical Oversight Board (TCMOB; Board) convened 10 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

Activities

Legislation

HB 89, adding qualifying medical conditions to the therapeutic use of cannabis law (adds moderate to severe insomnia & autism spectrum disorder)

- Based on work done in 2020 and 2021, the board voted to support the bill to add these conditions as qualifying medical conditions, and it has become law

HB 163, relative to cannabis use during pregnancy and adolescence.

- Board made recommendations on amending the bill, in particular to allow the Board the authority to establish (and update) the risks of cannabis use in pregnancy, while breastfeeding, and during adolescence; the recommendations were adopted by the legislature, and the bill has become law

HB 240, relative to identification of cannabis strain for therapeutic cannabis.

- Board voted to support this bill, and it has become law.

HB 605, relative to the therapeutic cannabis program (adds opioid use disorder)

- Board unanimously supported the section of this bill that added opioid use disorder to the list of qualifying medical conditions.

SB 29, relative to the health risks associated with dispensing high-concentration marijuana in ATCs.

- Board unanimously opposed the bill as written, despite acknowledging some important elements contained, and it was determined to be inexpedient to legislate

Education

A great deal of the Board's work in 2020 and 2021 has been to address education for medical providers about cannabis and the therapeutic cannabis program, including the development of recommended clinical practices for providers in the use therapeutic cannabis. The education work plan was delayed by COVID-19 but the majority of the work was completed in early 2021.

The plan is to have a TCMOB education page on the Department's Therapeutic Cannabis Program website, including a "Therapeutic Cannabis 101" slide deck functioning as an introduction to therapeutic cannabis and the NH Therapeutic Cannabis Program, links to TCMOB-vetted on-line introductory therapeutic cannabis educational programs which grant CME credits, links to TCMOB-vetted references for in-depth exploration of specific concerns or indications, and educational materials developed by TCMOB for specific patient issues such as pregnancy and breast-feeding, patients with substance use disorder, and use in adolescents and children.

Over several months, slides for the slide decks were developed by sub-groups and reviewed by the board. TCMOB gave its final approval and handed the slide decks off to DHHS for revision and formatting, and then the Board will provide final approval.

TCMOB also has worked on patient education, responding to the need for educational posters and brochures addressing the use of therapeutic cannabis during pregnancy and lactation and in adolescence. The Board developed educational materials for providers and patients and shared the pregnancy/lactation documents with the Community Health Institute (CHI) which has funding from the NH Charitable Foundation to develop these materials into posters and brochures. The Board reviewed their draft documents and have provided final edits on them.

Other Activities

This year TCMOB reviewed the analytic testing of cannabis for cannabinoids and for contaminants and are considering making recommendations to update the required testing to create efficiencies, reduce burden, and lower costs for the ATCs without sacrificing product quality and patient safety. TCMOB also reviewed the ATCs' product labelling requirements and practices, and made recommendations, and also reviewed the ATCs' comprehensive educational materials and practices used by the ATCs with patients.

TCMOB is invested in issues affecting the state's therapeutic cannabis *patients*, such as cost, product availability, accessibility, employment issues, and barriers to certification, along with the stigmatization of therapeutic cannabis in general and anything else that possibly diminishes the program's intent, which is to provide high-quality, laboratory-tested cannabis and cannabis products, and cannabis education, through New Hampshire's ATCs to the more than 13,000 patients in the state. The Board devoted one meeting in 2021 to explore these issues with a small group of patients, and then the Board hosted an advertised, public listening session to hear from patients, caregivers, medical providers, and interested members of the public regarding the function of the Therapeutic Cannabis Program so that the Board can better provide oversight of the medical and public-health aspects of the program.

Conclusion

In summary, TCMOB has become a very high-functioning board providing medical oversight to the state's Therapeutic Cannabis Program. The Board members are engaged, active, and work very hard at meeting their legislative responsibilities. The Board is pleased that the Legislature appears appreciative of its efforts and seriously considers its recommendations.