



POSITION STATEMENT

Medicinal Cannabis

Our position

The Leukaemia Foundation has a bold shared goal of zero lives lost to blood cancer by 2035. To achieve this, we are unwaveringly patient first – meaning the services we provide, research projects we fund, or issues we advocate for, have people living with blood cancer at the forefront of every decision we make.

We acknowledge that medicinal cannabis might help some blood cancer patients manage their side effects when conventional treatments aren't working. People with blood cancer should therefore be given access to medicinal cannabis if their health care provider believes it will help manage the side effects of treatment.

Currently there is no evidence that suggests medicinal cannabis can help prevent, or treat cancer, including blood cancer. Instead, it may help with managing symptoms and side effects of treatment. Medicinal cannabis should not be used to replace cancer treatment itself.

The Leukaemia Foundation encourages any patient who is seeking to access medicinal cannabis to talk to their healthcare professional to understand what is involved.



Alignment with Patient First Strategy Pillar:

Improve the experience for all those affected by blood cancer

What we do

The Leukaemia Foundation is the Australian charity stopping blood cancer from wrecking lives.

We exist for every Australian affected by any type of blood cancer, including leukaemia, lymphoma and myeloma.

The Leukaemia Foundation offers expert support, funds leading-edge research and campaigns to make change for Australians facing blood cancer.

Our goal is zero lives lost to blood cancer by 2035.

Our values power our purpose and drive us toward our goal: we care deeply, we're bold, and we always step up and make it count for people living with blood cancer.

Why we do it

Your blood is a remarkable thing. It keeps you alive by giving your body what it needs, taking away what it doesn't and fighting off infection.

Blood cancer stops your blood from doing what it needs to keep you alive and healthy.

It develops in the places of your body where blood is made, but its exact cause is unknown.

Another 53 Australians are diagnosed with blood cancer each day, joining more than 135,000 people living with the devastating impact of our second most diagnosed cancer.

A range of things affect someone's chance of surviving blood cancer and it can be incurable. Sadly, another 16 Australians will lose their life to blood cancer each and every day.

Frequently asked questions

<i>What is medicinal cannabis?</i>	<p>The term ‘medicinal cannabis’ describes a range of cannabis preparations intended for therapeutic use such as oil, tinctures and other extracts, untreated cannabis, cannabis resin, and synthetic cannabinoids.</p> <p>Medicinal cannabis is not administered through smoking, which can be harmful when carcinogenic substances are inhaled into the lungs.</p>
<i>Is medicinal cannabis legal in Australia?</i>	<p>Medicinal cannabis is not the same as recreational use of marijuana. Medicinal cannabis is a treatment that can be legally prescribed by doctors. Natural and synthetic forms of marijuana remain illegal in Australia.</p>
<i>How is medicinal cannabis prescribed / accessed?</i>	<p>Governments at both Federal, State and Territory levels have implemented legislative and policy changes to allow the cultivation, manufacturing, prescribing, and dispensing of medicinal cannabis products for patients in Australia.</p> <p>The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) administers the Therapeutic Goods Act 1989 (the Act), which establishes the regulatory framework for all medicines in Australia.</p> <p>Medicinal Cannabis is listed as an ‘unapproved therapeutic good’ under the Act. The Act provides different mechanisms to allow access to unapproved therapeutic goods. For medicinal cannabis products these include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Authorised prescriber Scheme (AP)• Special access scheme (SAS)• Clinical trials <p>Medicinal cannabis products can only be prescribed by a doctor. Patients will need to complete a full health assessment first and if the doctor decides medicinal cannabis is right for a patient, they will need to apply for State and Commonwealth Government approval to prescribe it. Patients cannot apply for medicinal cannabis by themselves.</p>
<i>What symptoms can medicinal cannabis help manage?</i>	<p>Some studies have shown that medicinal cannabis may alleviate symptoms in the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• in relieving nausea and vomiting in patients undergoing chemotherapy;• as a form of alternative pain medication in patients with moderate to severe pain; and/or• as an appetite stimulant for cancer patients experiencing weight loss and muscle wasting. <p>Medicinal cannabis is not appropriate for patients who are pregnant, planning on becoming pregnant, and/or breastfeeding</p>

Frequently asked questions

Can Leukaemia Foundation staff discuss medicinal cannabis with a patient?

No. Due to the complexity of the Therapeutic Goods Administration requirements, Leukaemia Foundation staff will refer any conversations with a patient to their relevant health care professional who will be able to guide them through eligibility requirements and access pathways.

REFERENCES

1. Australian Government Department of Health Therapeutic Goods Administration, Guidance for the use of medicinal cannabis in Australia: Overview. <https://www.tga.gov.au/publication/guidance-use-medicinal-cannabis-australia-overview>
2. Australian Government Department of Health Therapeutic Goods Administration, Access to medicinal cannabis products. <https://www.tga.gov.au/access-medicinal-cannabis-products-1>
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4. Centre for Medicinal Cannabis Research and Innovation, National evidence review. <https://www.medicinalcannabis.nsw.gov.au/health-professionals/prescribing-pathways>
5. Centre for Medicinal Cannabis Research and Innovation, The Centre. <https://www.medicinalcannabis.nsw.gov.au/about/cannabis-medicines-program>

More questions? Get in touch

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