



DH, MMRegulations

From: mfcrew@aol.com
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To: RA-DHMMregulations@pa.gov <RA-DHMMregulations@pa.gov>
Subject: [External] Proposed Regulations to MMJ Program

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Attn: John J. Collins

I am writing regarding the proposed regulation changes to the Pennsylvania Medical Marijuana Program. I recently wrote and released an article praising Pennsylvania for opening medical marijuana to telehealth. It has opened access to care and helped so many patients in the past year. (<https://www.24-7pressrelease.com/press-release/480467/covid-opened-access-to-care-for-medical-marijuana-in-pennsylvania>). I am excited for the continuation of the program. As a certifying physician, however, I have some concerns and suggestions.

First, the medical conditions are overlapping, not specific, open to a lot of interpretation and likely often result in qualified patients being denied or non qualified patients being certified. For example, IBD (inflammatory bowel disease) is Crohn's and ulcerative colitis by definition so 1. why list Crohn's? 2. while doctors should know the difference, many patients and probable some doctors confuse IBS (irritable bowel syndrome) and IBD. That said, the symptoms of IBS are often ameliorated with cannabis and so I would suggest adding IBS and listing Crohn's and ulcerative colitis. Neurodegenerative disease, neuropathies, chronic pain all overlap. Cancer, including remission therapy? So I understand remission therapy in some more alternative treatments includes cannabis. Most doctors don't. Also, cancer is so not specific - active cancer, cancer ten years ago? This is not clear for doctors or patients.

Second, very concerning to me are large corporations such as Veriheal and NuggMD who "contract" doctors to do certifications. Fresh off my registering I worked for one of these companies. It sounded great, get paid per consultation, they schedule clients for you and keep records. Well, they only paid if you certified the patient which is really a moral hazard and puts pressure on the doctor. They provide no malpractice. They claim to keep medical records. Out of an abundance of rule following and precaution, I created my own SOAP note and uploaded it to their system. I created a HIPPA secured google account to keep my own records, however, Veriheal did not permit me to download the complete file. Months after I left when a patient tried to get information he kept getting a generated reply referring him to me. Neither I, the insurance company, or he could speak to anyone in person nor could we get his records. These organizations create major liabilities for doctors and I feel are extremely harmful for patients. Patients should be certified by a medical practice run by a medical doctor.

Finally, the rules for doctors. Why should I not be allowed to certify my father who has Parkinson's disease and arthritis not amenable to surgery? Who knows him better - a doctor he never met or me? It is much safer for me to manage his care. Yet, I can lose my license. Further, why can't I certify myself. Now I have to pay someone \$200. Why? either way, I am in control of the products I purchase at the dispensary. Unlike opiates, we are not prescribing marijuana. Certifying a loved one or myself is providing access to a medication which, for many, is a cream that does not even cause a "high." It is not the same as writing for 90 oxycodone pills that can destroy a life or worse, take a life. This rule does not prevent a doctor from certifying people irresponsibly, which happens currently anyway. One could make up chronic pain for everyone who is willing to pay them or certify all their friends who don't qualify. I am working hard to legitimize medical marijuana because I believe in its efficacy. I have malpractice, keep medical records, follow up on my patients and even provide referrals to get therapy/psychiatric care. Most of us marijuana physicians are the same and we follow the rules. If a family member or if we have a condition that qualifies we should be able to certify and not risk action against our license.

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this. I am so appreciative of this program and the telehealth options which allows me to practice. Marijuana medicine has been more rewarding in one year than over a decade in the ER.

Best,

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