



## Lessons & Insights from the Front Lines of Medical Cannabis

IT4Cannabis held its third webinar of its "Insights and Opportunities" series titled, "Lessons and Insights from the Frontlines of Medical Cannabis," on September 15. This was a part two of the June medical webinar and again featured the highly requested medical cannabis expert panelists, Dr. Jennifer Anderson, Rebecca Abraham, RN, and Dr. Bridget Williams.

The panelists spoke about the therapeutic effects of cannabis for intractable conditions such as epilepsy, the role of medical cannabis for men's and women's health, where to buy safe and effective cannabis, and the critical reasons to work with a cannabis clinician rather than a budtender.

### Therapeutic Effects of Medical Cannabis

Webinar host and IT4Cannabis president and CEO, Karl Kispert opened the webinar with a video featuring Anderson telling the story of her epileptic son and the struggles her family faced with his health until they found medical cannabis as a solution.

Anderson's son was born with cerebral palsy as a result of twin-to-twin transfusion syndrome. The condition led to him having severe epileptic episodes that made her fearful for his life.



They tried every treatment available and were running out of options. When she gave him cannabis to calm his seizures, the effect was profound. With one drop of a CBD hemp oil, Anderson noticed he was more present than he had ever been, and could sleep through the night without an episode.

Getting medical professionals on board with cannabis as a treatment option, however, was not easy for Anderson.

"Due to politics, the neurology team basically had a flat out 'no' in terms of letting patients access cannabis," she said. Finding a physician who specialized in treating epilepsy with cannabis was nearly impossible.

As a result, she began her journey in helping children with chronic conditions treat their symptoms with cannabis, and continues to speak out against the stigma around using cannabis as a form of medical treatment.

"I'm a family physician and if somebody had told me my practice would involve giving marijuana to kids, I would've said you were crazy," said Anderson, a physician in Manitoba, Canada.

### Role in Men's and Women's Health

Dr. Bridget Williams, an Ohio-based physician and founder of Green Harvest Health – a medical cannabis and life coaching clinic – also treats patients with medical cannabis. She continued the conversation by addressing how men and women use cannabis differently.

"Whenever I'm seeing patients, I make sure I don't dose, or make the same suggestions for every patient," says Williams, as she explained men and women's tolerances to THC are not the same. Further, women's hormonal cycles are a contributing factor to their body's response to the plant.

Williams explained men and women also sometimes have completely different reactions to THC use.



“When it comes to sexual health for women [cannabis] tends to increase sexual desire, where in men it tends to decrease their sexual desire and can even lead to erectile dysfunction as you dose higher and higher,” she said, emphasizing the importance of dosing patients on an individual basis.

Rebecca Abraham, RN and founder of Acute on Chronic – a cannabis consulting and patient advocacy business in Illinois – discussed other ways cannabis affects men and women differently.

“There is a definitive positive relationship between cannabis, CBD, THC, increasing serotonin, increasing dopamine, those are where we get all of our pleasure from. If you add that into how women are absorbing cannabis in their fat cells, you get increased sexual pleasure, less anxiety, more confidence,” Abraham explained.

## Cooler and More Relaxed

Abraham pointed out there may be a correlation between cannabis use and the alleviation of symptoms in menopausal women as well.

“Cannabis turns down our natural internal thermostat. It makes you hypothermic, so it makes you a little cooler. This mechanism can decrease hot flashes in women,” she said.

Williams and Abraham also discussed how cannabis can increase intimacy by alleviating pain and inflammation and helping partners unwind from daily stress and make more time for this aspect of their lives.

Williams then followed up on Abraham’s point about cannabis use and menopause, and discussed how she doses patients during this time in their lives.

“There’s a complete connection between women’s hormonal cycles and estrogen levels and estrogen works directly with the endocannabinoid system and our natural THC,” she said. “Estrogen will help keep our natural endocannabinoids working longer, activating our body and calming our body and relaxing. CBD comes in and blocks that same enzyme that keeps our body working and our natural endocannabinoids working longer as well. There’s a direct connection there.”

## Cannabis Use in Pediatrics

Next, Anderson spoke about pediatrics and cannabis use for autistic children.

“Kids with autism have varying responses. Usually, I’m just using CBD with them, and I’m finding low [dose] responders and high dose responders. Some kids actually do worse, then you increase the dose and they do much better. With some kids, they need to start micro-dosing with some THC,” she said. “I’ve had some kids who were completely rigid, unmanageable, unable to stay in the classroom, and it has done wonders for these kids.”

Anderson not only sees children with conditions such as autism and epilepsy, she works with children with mental health issues and childhood cancer. She told a story where she advocated for one of her patients to leave the country and go on a family vacation with the child’s cannabis prescription. Her efforts working with both countries’ governments were successful, and her patient was one of the first-ever to be able to fly with medical cannabis as a child.

“At that moment I realized I had a voice and could promote change for other kids,” she said. “That encouraged me to get out there, share my story and advocate for these kids politically on every level.”



## Dosing Methods

Host Karl Kispert brought the conversation to different methods of administration for patients.

“One of the things holding back a lot of patients is they believe they have to smoke it,” said Williams. She acknowledged her home state of Ohio only allows medical use, due to the strong stigma against people who smoke cannabis recreationally. Because of this attitude, Williams works with patients to learn their treatment goals, and then doses them according to their preferred intake method.

Anderson, however, has to try out different methods for her pediatric patients depending on their condition. She has become well-versed in the different ways to administer cannabis so she can properly prescribe it to children and help their families administer it at home.

“I have explored every option. I have kids who take oral cannabis. For kids who can’t, I have learned how to dose it through the G-tube,” said Anderson.

Abraham noted she finds administering CBD through suppositories works very well for the patients she sees, especially those who are palliative and can’t take cannabis orally. She also mentioned vaginal suppositories for women. These can alleviate symptoms associated with painful intercourse, endometriosis, and menstrual cramps.



## Clinician vs. Budtender

With so many options available, it’s important for patients to find a trusted source with whom to discuss their medical needs and get access to the right treatment. With this in mind, Kispert asked the panelists to explain the benefits of working with a clinician versus a budtender, who is a dispensary worker for medical cannabis.

“It’s a lot easier for a medical professional to catch up on cannabis education and understanding than a lay person,” said Williams. She tries to educate budtenders, who often have limited medical knowledge.

Abraham pointed out budtenders often face a lot of corporate pressure, which can lead them to make uninformed choices for patients. This is also something Williams has seen often, and it can pose dangers for patients.

“I’ve had patients who have ended up in the hospital because the budtender or dispensary assistant went against my suggestion,” said Williams.

The three panelists agreed there are ingredients in recreational cannabis that can poorly interact with patients’ medications and threaten their lives. As a result, Canadian dispensaries are no longer allowed to make medical recommendations by law, Anderson said.





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## Concluding Thoughts

To conclude the webinar, the panelists each offered insight into their unique roles as medical cannabis experts and talked about their individual approaches to highlighting the importance of advocacy and education to break the stigma around cannabis as a reliable treatment.

“When you reach out to a cannabis physician or a cannabis nurse, you are not only getting a service for yourself in tailored dosing and how to do this correctly, you’re also getting advocacy to the rest of the world. For instance, if a doctor hasn’t worked with me before, I reach out to all of my patients and all of their physicians and tell them about what I do and offer them free education,” said Abraham.



## Stay Tuned For More Cannabis Insights

To keep the discussion alive and continue moving toward acceptance and education, IT4Cannabis holds an “Insights and Opportunities” webinar every six to eight weeks. We are currently working on the details of our next webinar. Stay tuned to the Insights and Opportunities webinar series page for more information.



## About the Author

Carly Russo is a versatile content writer experienced in authoring marketing pieces on various topics including music, lifestyle, and cybersecurity and IT solutions.