

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

GOVERNOR PHIL MURPHY

## MEDICINAL MARIJUANA PROGRAM GROWS BY 10,000 PATIENTS SINCE START OF MURPHY ADMINISTRATION

*From the New Jersey Department of Health:*

**TRENTON** - Ten thousand patients have joined the Department of Health's Medicinal Marijuana program since the Murphy Administration began in January—for a total of 25,000 patients and 1,000 caregivers participating.

"By changing the restrictive culture of the State's Medical Marijuana program, we are now providing greater access to treatment for those who truly need to be helped," **said Governor Phil Murphy**. "The addition of 10,000 new patients since January demonstrates this Administration's commitment to making the program more responsive to the needs of patients, physicians and dispensaries."

Of the 10,000 patients who have signed up since January, 6,300 have one of the six new medical conditions added at the end of March: anxiety, migraines, Tourette's syndrome, chronic pain related to musculoskeletal disorders, and chronic visceral pain.

A sixth dispensary opened in Secaucus June 18 and several satellite Alternative Treatment Center locations are also in the works.

"These numbers reflect that we are building a compassionate, consumer-friendly program," **said Health Commissioner Dr. Shereef Elnahal**.

The Department is also continuing its public awareness campaign to let residents know that the program has expanded. "Talk to your doctor to see if you qualify," a promoted Facebook ad states. The ad started Friday and will run through the summer.

In addition, patients, caregivers and physicians can now access the program across mobile platforms so they can register, upload documents and make payments on tablets, iPhones and other devices.

"But our work is far from done," **added Elnahal**. "With the influx of new patients, New Jersey's medicinal marijuana market needs more competition, choice and greater value – goals that we look forward to working with all our stakeholders to accomplish."

On June 18, the Department proposed ([https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A\\_\\_t.e2ma.net\\_click\\_v909v\\_zo77ft\\_vpd2if&d=DwMFaQ&c=4BTEw-1msHJOY4lTcFLmDM6JB8x6ZgbU2J24IH0HZLU&r=UI0OhB4iQoT5Bg\\_oJ-Dn0E9Yi9-hVuvMzZWbSN6RKxw&m=cKWkA8KV0PECjgqMHYaxmMNTcQqy8FPwUn2zYsRDok&s=qo6l8iYQ4iFWWhBSc3ltLIRm737lL55ooQk88a-nBbzk&e=](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__t.e2ma.net_click_v909v_zo77ft_vpd2if&d=DwMFaQ&c=4BTEw-1msHJOY4lTcFLmDM6JB8x6ZgbU2J24IH0HZLU&r=UI0OhB4iQoT5Bg_oJ-Dn0E9Yi9-hVuvMzZWbSN6RKxw&m=cKWkA8KV0PECjgqMHYaxmMNTcQqy8FPwUn2zYsRDok&s=qo6l8iYQ4iFWWhBSc3ltLIRm737lL55ooQk88a-nBbzk&e=)) Medicinal Marijuana rules changes to implement Governor Murphy's Executive Order 6 that will expand access to marijuana therapy responsibly, and to thousands more patients who need it.

About 700 of the 28,000 licensed physicians are registered to participate in the program. But, Dr. Elnahal is encouraging the medical community to embrace medicinal marijuana as yet another therapeutic tool—not an independent or alternative therapy.

As a result, the Commissioner is traveling around the state to medical schools and hospitals this summer giving special Grand Rounds lectures to medical students, faculty, physicians and clinicians to explain the Murphy Administration's expansion of the program, as well as research on use of marijuana to treat certain medical conditions.

The first grand rounds lecture was held May 29 at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School and July 11 the series will continue at St. Joseph's University Medical Center in Paterson and Hackensack Meridian Health Hackensack University Medical Center. Then in mid-September, lectures are scheduled at Cooper Medical School of Rowan University, Jersey City Medical Center, Virtua Health and the New Jersey Medical School in Newark.

Although research is limited, studies have shown the marijuana has benefited patients with chronic pain, cancer, HIV, Epilepsy, Multiple Sclerosis, IBD and Rheumatoid Arthritis, among many other conditions.

"More physicians should look to medicinal marijuana as a safe, effective treatment – and one that can help not only improve patients' wellbeing but also combat the opioid crisis," **Commissioner Elnahal said**.

That's why Commissioner Elnahal is exploring adding opioid use disorder—in concert with Medication Assisted Treatment—to the list of conditions that would allow patients to participate in the program.

The opioid epidemic is the most critical public health challenge facing our state. Opioids are highly toxic, addictive and caused 2,200 overdose deaths in our state in 2016.

Studies have demonstrated a strong correlation between the availability of medical marijuana and the reduction of opioid prescriptions.

Medical marijuana can help reduce reliance on opioid prescriptions, saving many from a lifetime of addiction and possible overdose death. Two studies in the Journal of the American Medical Association showed a 6 percent decrease in opioid prescriptions in states with strong medicinal marijuana laws. Another study showed that access to medical marijuana reduced opioid-related deaths by 24 percent compared to states without medicinal marijuana laws.

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# Governor Phil Murphy

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