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New Cannabis Consulting Service Helps Chicago Patients Navigate the Medical Marijuana Maze
Innovative Cannabis Consulting guides patients through cannabis education and bridges the gap between traditional medicine and medical marijuana for patients seeking symptom relief

Chicago – Unlike pharmaceuticals, medical cannabis doesn't come with detailed prescriptions for drug types or dosages. Patients who complete the often lengthy state application process typically embark on a cycle of trial and error to determine what cannabis products will work best for their unique health challenges, and unfortunately, with little to no physician oversight. Innovative Express Care, a trusted primary care clinic in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood, has been aiding patients who wish to incorporate medical cannabis into their care for nearly two years, and recognized the need for improved cannabis education and guidance. The clinic recently launched Innovative Cannabis Consulting, a service that provides physician support and patient-to-patient knowledge sharing to help patients navigate the medical marijuana maze.

"Each patient is unique and there isn't a specific formula to determine if edibles, lozenges, oils or another form of medical cannabis will work best. There is however tremendous knowledge to be gained by sharing information and documenting patient successes," said Rahul Khare, MD, president and founder of Innovative Express Care. "We educate patients on the options available to them, and offer continued support as they supplement traditional medical treatment with cannabis to reduce debilitating symptoms. Many patients are even able to wean off of opioid and benzodiazepine drugs altogether, which carry long-term side effects and risk.

Innovative Cannabis Consulting launched in late fall 2017, and is the first primary care clinic in Chicago to offer this level of support to medical cannabis patients.

"Medical cannabis has been available in Illinois for two years, yet many physicians still do not support patients who wish to explore cannabis for symptom relief," said Khare. "We opened our doors to medical cannabis patients to fill a largely unmet need in the community and to provide continuity of care. Patients can turn to us for primary care, urgent care and for support with medical cannabis if they have a qualifying condition, with all services under one roof."

Khare teamed up with Farah Morales, a cannabis educator with 20 years of experience, to launch Innovative Cannabis Consulting. The pair offer appointments twice weekly and has used the science available to put together specific protocols for conditions such as spinal cord disease (chronic pain), PTSD, rheumatoid arthritis, glaucoma, fibromyalgia and Epilepsy. They also help patients with opiate reduction and lowering benzodiazepine (Xanax, Valium, Ativan) and other antidepressant medications. Innovative Cannabis Consulting plans to continue expanding their services, by adding support groups and more detailed protocols for qualifying conditions in the future.

"Before making a cannabis recommendation, we must first take into consideration the patient's health goals, medication history and the methods they have previously tried for symptom relief," said Morales. "Dispensary offerings and the experience of their staff can vary, so we arm patients with knowledge that

will help them confidently enter a dispensary setting, and hopefully shorten the trial and error period so they may achieve symptom relief sooner.”

Michael McGee decided to explore medical cannabis after years of using prescription drugs, including opioid and benzodiazepine medications, to treat pain caused by cervical stenosis of the spine. Through monthly appointments with Dr. Khare, most of which were done remotely using telemedicine, Mike was able to slowly wean off of his prescription medications and now uses cannabis alone to alleviate his pain.

“I have a long list of medications I tried before turning to medical cannabis, but all came with side effects and many left me feeling out of control and in a fog. I was concerned about using the drugs long-term and felt my quality of life diminishing,” said McGee. “Now, things are clear again and I feel in control. Medical cannabis has helped me manage my pain without side effects.”

For more information on Innovative Cannabis Consulting and other services offered at Innovative Express Care, visit innovativeexpresscare.com.

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