

Canadian Undergraduate and Graduate Nursing Students: Interest in Education in Medical and Recreational Cannabis for Practice and Career Development

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Abstract : Due to a new area of practice, Canadian nurses possess knowledge gaps regarding the use of cannabis-based therapies by clients/patients. Education related to medical cannabis (MC) and recreational cannabis (RC) is required to promote nurses' competency and confidence in supporting clients/patients using MC/RC toward the improvement of health outcomes. A team composed of nursing researchers and undergraduate/graduate students implemented a national survey to explore this theme with the population of undergraduate, graduate (MN and NP), and Post-Diploma (RN Bridging) nursing students enrolled in Canadian Universities Nursing Programs. Upon Research Ethics Board approval, survey recruitment was supported by major nursing stakeholders. The research questions were : (a) Which are the most preferred sources of information on MC/RC for nursing students? (b) Which are the factors and preferred learning modalities that could increase interest in learning about MC/RC, and (c) What are the future career plans among nursing students, and how would they consider the prospective use of cannabis in their practice? The survey was available from Sept. 2022 to Feb. 2023, hosted by a remote platform. An original questionnaire (English-French) was composed of 18 multiple choice questions and 2 open-ended questions. Sociodemographic information and closed-ended responses were compiled as descriptive statistics, while narrative accounts will be analysed through thematic analysis. Respondents (n=153) were from 7 Canadian provinces, national (99%) and international students (1%); the majority of respondents (61%) were in the age range of 21-30 years old. Results indicated that respondents perceive a gap in the undergraduate curriculum on the topics of MC/RC (91%) and that their learning needs include regulations (90%), data on effectiveness (88%), dosing best practices (86%), contraindications (83%), and clinical and medical indications (76%). Respondents reported motivation to learn more about MC/RC through online lectures/videos (65%), e-learning modules or online interactive training (61%), workshops (51%), webinars (36%), and social media (35%). Their primary career-related motivations regarding MC/RC knowledge include enhancing nursing practice (76%), learning about this growing scope of practice (61%), keeping up-to-date responding to scientific curiosity (59%), learning about evidence-based practice (59%), and utilizing alternative forms of medical treatment (37%). Respondents indicated that the integration of topics on cannabis in any course in the undergraduate and/or graduate curriculum would increase their desire to learn about MC/RC as equally as exposure within a clinical setting (75%). The emerging trend in the set of narrative responses (n=130) suggests that respondents believe educational MC/RC content should be integrated into core nursing courses. Respondents also urged educators to be well-informed about evidence-based practice related to MC/RC and to reflect upon stigma and biases surrounding its use. Future knowledge dissemination and translation activities include scholarly products and presentations to stimulate discussion amongst nursing faculty and students, as well as nurses in clinical settings. The goal is to mobilise talents and build collaboration for the development of a socially responsive curriculum on MC/RC competency to address the education-related expectations of all these social actors.

Keywords : Canada, medical cannabis, nursing education, nursing graduate student, nursing undergraduate student, online survey, recreational cannabis

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