



**ARTHRITIS
NEW ZEALAND**

KAIPONAPONA AOTEAROA

*Our Vision: Improving the life of
every person affected by arthritis*

*Ko tō mātou aranga: Kia whakapiki
i te oranga o te hunga kua pāngia
e te mate kaiponapona*

Submission on the Misuse of Drugs (Medicinal Cannabis) Amendment Bill

Arthritis New Zealand is a not for profit organisation that has represented the interests of New Zealanders with arthritis for more than 50 years. Our Mission is to improve the life of every person affected by arthritis.

Arthritis affects over 647,000 New Zealanders making it a leading cause of disability in New Zealand. The number of people with arthritis is growing - by 2020, more than 650,000 people, or 1 in 5, will be living with arthritis. Arthritis affects people of all ages and the majority of our over 20,000 clients are of working age.

Many people with arthritis experience pain, often chronically, as a result of their arthritis. We know that there is anecdotal evidence that cannabis can help with the pain many people have. We know there are a number of people with arthritis who ask for and advocate for greater access to medicinal cannabis.

We support and understand the intent of the Bill and note that this will not apply to the majority of people with arthritis as these are not terminal conditions, unless they have another comorbid illness.

Before decisions can be made around widening the availability of medicinal cannabis for people who are not terminally ill, there needs to be evidence that medicinal cannabis is a legitimate treatment of pain. If it is being made available as a medicine, research needs to be undertaken on the therapeutic benefits. Increased use of clinical trials and further research to add to the evidence base surrounding the use of medicinal cannabis, particularly which shows the benefit and safety for people with arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions is necessary.

Research by Fitzcharles and Häuser on ['Cannabinoids in the Management of Musculoskeletal or Rheumatic Diseases'](#) found that the risks of herbal cannabis in patients are not well defined and recommended that anecdote and advocacy cannot supersede sound evidence.

We will be particularly interested to learn of the results of Oxford University's research on the medical benefits of medicinal cannabis in treating pain, cancer and inflammatory diseases.

We would recommend the government commissions research to assess the efficacy of medicinal cannabis for the treatment of pain.