

Growth of CBD Pharmacy Market

The CBD market is one of the fastest growing within the OTC sector.



The global CBD oil and CBD consumer health market size is expected to reach USD 123.2 billion by 2027, expanding at a CAGR of 25.6% over the forecast period according to the latest market report in this field.

However recent legislation changes have provided some confusion within community pharmacies. It was announced last year that CBD companies would have until 31 March 2021 to have a validated novel foods application for each of their products or else risk being removed from shelves.

Pharmacies were able to sell CBD products currently on the market until the end of March this year, as long as these were “labelled correctly” and are not “unsafe to eat [or] contain substances that fall under drugs legislation”.

The criteria for products which can remain on sale from 1 April 2021 has been updated. Previously, only products which were on sale at the time of the FSA’s announcement (13 February 2020) and were linked to an application which had been validated by 31 March 2021 were to be included. To maximise the opportunity to pass validation, this now includes all products on sale on 13 February 2020 and linked to an application submitted before 31 March 2021 that is subsequently validated.

Irish rules on CBD stand in line with the European Union’s Novel

Food Regulation. This regulation classifies CBD as a novel food, which doesn’t have a significant history of consumption in Europe before May 15, 1997.

Besides the “history of consumption” rule, the Irish authorities included an additional standard for CBD products — the type of the extraction process.

According to Irish laws, CBD extracted with solvents or supercritical CO2 extraction requires a novel food permit from the European Commission (EC). Otherwise, it can’t be marketed as a food product or health supplement.

However, the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) stated that if the CBD oil is extracted by cold pressing it is legal for sale. One brand that uses this process is Emerald Farm – which is cold press and 100% compliant.

Medicinal Cannabis Access Programme

At the start of this year, Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly TD, announced provision for the delivery and funding of the Medicinal Cannabis Access Programme.

“The Budget in October 2020 saw an extra €4billion added to the Health Budget. This increase is indicative of how determined we in Government are to fund an

expansion of, and improvements in, our health and social care services,” he said.

“One of the improvements in our Health Services that will benefit from this extra funding is the Medicinal Cannabis Access Programme which has been added to the HSE Service Plan for 2021.

“The purpose of this Programme is to facilitate compassionate access to cannabis for medical reasons, where conventional treatment has failed. It follows the clear pathway laid out by the Health Products Regulatory Authority in their expert report ‘Cannabis for Medical Use – A Scientific Review’.

“Ultimately it will be the decision of the medical consultant, in consultation with their patient, to prescribe a particular treatment, including a cannabis-based treatment, for a patient under their care. It is important to state that there are no plans to legalise cannabis in this country.”

Once suitable medical cannabis products are made available by suppliers, the Access Programme will make it possible for a medical consultant to prescribe a listed cannabis-based treatment for a patient under his or her care for the following medical conditions, where the patient has failed to respond to standard treatments:

- spasticity associated with multiple sclerosis
- intractable nausea and vomiting associated with chemotherapy
- severe, refractory (treatment-resistant) epilepsy.

Ground-breaking Projects

CÚRAM, the SFI Research Centre for Medical Devices based at NUI Galway, has announced a new research partnership with B. Braun, one of the world’s leading providers and manufacturers of healthcare solutions. The partnership will see the development of a novel drug delivery system for cannabinoids for more effective treatment of wound pain and improved wound healing, and the development of a device for the management of wound odour.

Chronic wounds affect up to 4% of people over 65 years, with venous leg ulcers being the most prevalent of these, accounting for approximately 70% of all ulcers of the lower limbs. Chronic wounds are associated with reduced quality of life and affect the individual in physical, psychological and psychosocial domains. This in turn can impact family members and the individual’s ability to contribute to society fully.

Among the many symptoms associated with chronic wounds, pain is cited as one of the worst aspects. While multiple forms of pain relief exist, these do not provide relief for all patients, and people with chronic wounds regularly state they do not wish to take more medication and have a fear of addiction.

Professor Georgina Gethin, CÚRAM Investigator, project co-lead, and Director of the Alliance for Research and Innovation in Wounds, explains, “Members of our patient panel in Alliance for Research and Innovation in Wounds have recounted using a trial and error process to alleviate pain and often take to resting until the pain goes away. They have identified that research to develop interventions to relieve pain is a priority for them. The endogenous cannabinoid (endocannabinoid) system plays a key role in pain modulation and also regulates wound healing. It represents a novel target for more effective dual management of both pain and wound healing.”

Professor David Finn, an Investigator in CÚRAM, Head of Pharmacology, and Co-Director of NUI Galway’s Centre for Pain Research is a co-lead on the project. He brings over 20 years of expertise in cannabinoids, the endocannabinoid system and pain to the project. His group will play a key role in advancing understanding of the endocannabinoid system in wound pain and healing, and in preclinical testing of the novel cannabinoid-eluting delivery system for more effective treatment of wound pain and improved wound healing.