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Contact: Beatriz Duque Long
bduquelong@efa.org
301-918-3764

Patient Groups Urge DEA to Lift Barriers to Cannabis Research

As DEA Considers FDA Recommendation on the Scheduling of Cannabis, Patients Urge DEA to Reschedule Cannabis and Pave Way for Research and New Treatments

Landover, MD – Today several organizations representing Americans living with chronic and rare health conditions sent Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Acting Administrator, Chuck Rosenberg, a letter expressing broad support from the patient community for removing federal barriers to cannabis research. The Epilepsy Foundation was joined by several other epilepsy groups, as well as Americans for Safe Access, National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Parkinson’s Action Network, and The Aids Institute.

Moving cannabis from Schedule I in the Controlled Substances Act (CSA) would pave the way for greater research and new treatments. Currently it is difficult for scientists and researchers to organize clinical trials involving cannabis because it is a Schedule I substance and only the National Institute for Drug Abuse (NIDA) can cultivate cannabis for medical research. There are also additional costs and infrastructure requirements due to the Schedule I status that can limit innovation and investment in medical benefit research.

“We have seen firsthand the devastation that individuals and families suffer from chronic diseases and conditions and know families and individuals in need of treatments are urgently pushing for more innovation,” said Phil Gattone, president and CEO for the Epilepsy Foundation. “Despite the need for more research into the connection between cannabis and health outcomes, far too many obstacles stand in the way of researchers due to the requirements of the CSA classification. We know that moving from Schedule I does not legalize cannabis, but it does improve the process for research and demonstrates to investors and research institutions that there is medical value in cannabis research.”

The Epilepsy Foundation is closely watching the recent DEA announcement that it would make a determination on the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommendation on the scheduling of cannabis in the first half of 2016. This announcement was included in a letter from DEA, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), sent to the Senate in response to a 2015 letter. The Epilepsy Foundation has been a strong supporter of removing federal barriers to cannabis research by moving cannabis from Schedule I in the Controlled Substances Act and led the group letter effort. This effort includes a broad coalition of patient organizations and represents the growing support across the nation for removing barriers to cannabis research with a change in the DEA CSA Schedule.

About Epilepsy

When a person has one or more unprovoked seizures, they are considered to have epilepsy. Epilepsy affects 3 million people in the U.S. and 65 million worldwide. This year, another 150,000 people will be diagnosed with epilepsy. Despite all available treatments, 4 out of 10 people with epilepsy continue to experience uncontrolled seizures while many more experience less than optimal seizure control.

About the Epilepsy Foundation

The Epilepsy Foundation, a national non-profit with nearly 50 affiliated organizations throughout the U.S., has led the fight against seizures since 1968. The Foundation is an unwavering ally for individuals

8301 Professional Place East, Suite 200
Landover, MD 20785-2353

1-800-332-1000
301-459-3700

FAX: 301-577-2684
epilepsy.com

The Epilepsy Foundation is your unwavering ally on your journey with epilepsy and seizures. The Foundation is a community-based, family-led organization dedicated to improving the lives of all people impacted by seizures.



and families impacted by epilepsy and seizures. The mission of the Epilepsy Foundation is: to lead the fight to overcome the challenges of living with epilepsy and to accelerate therapies to stop seizures, find cures, and save lives. The Foundation works to ensure that people with seizures have the opportunity to live their lives to their fullest potential. For additional information, please visit epilepsy.com.

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