



Two Caribbean Entities Join Forces On Marijuana Research

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By NAN Staff Writer

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During the seminar on October 15, 2015, CITIVA's Chief Medical Officer, Jack D'Angelo MD, MBA, delivered a lecture on Cannabinoids and the Management of Multiple Disease States. It is the second time in months the two entities have worked together. In July, CITIVA initiated construction of the world's first facility dedicated to medical marijuana research at UWI. "In the US we are only allowed to legally study the undesirable effects [of marijuana]; those are the only studies that can be funded," said D'Angelo, adding that, "these studies are a little bit unfair in their interpretation."

CITIVA's research will focus on the endocannabinoid system – a system within the human body which is involved in a variety of physiological processes including appetite, pain-sensation, mood, and memory. CITIVA is seeking to show how the naturally occurring cannabinoids in marijuana affect different disease states, particularly Type II Diabetes, Epilepsy and Neuropathic Pain.

Support for the inaugural seminar came from an array of medical fields, with many individuals looking forward to the start of CITIVA's clinical trials. "It's good to see that there was a multidisciplinary turnout," said Eric Williams, who is a consultant in Emergency Medicine at the University Hospital. Amongst those in attendance were, pediatric neurologist Dr. Roxanne Melbourne-Chambers, senior lecturer in Physiology at UWI, Dr. Dagogo Pebble, and Executive Director of the Jamaican Epilepsy Association, Joy McHugh. "This is a growing industry," said Pebble, "and having Citiva here will be like having [the research] at the home of the plant." CITIVA's research into Type II Diabetes, epilepsy and neuropathic pain could have additional benefits for the local population. "Particularly within our context and our strained resources, this would seem to be an option worth researching to see if it is clinically applicable," said Chambers, who treats many children with severe epilepsy at the University Hospital. The cost of cannabinoid treatments is expected to be significantly lower than synthetic products.

Along with their work at UWI, CITIVA is working closely with the Diabetes Association of Jamaica (DAJ) and the Jamaican Epilepsy Association (JEA) to study these diseases and how cannabinoids can be beneficial to treatment. One initiative, spear-headed by CITIVA and the JEA, is to make cannabinoid treatments available to all children afflicted with epilepsy. "People in the US move to states where [marijuana is] available to treat their children," said D'Angelo, who used the CNN piece by Dr. Sanjay Gupta as a prime example of how these treatments work.

CITIVA seeks to make medical practitioners and educators aware of the advancements in marijuana research. "Still in medical schools we don't spend any time educating people on this topic," according to D'Angelo. The hope is to grow this series of CME Seminars into a program at the UWI which will be a critical part of proving the efficacy of cannabinoid treatments.

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