

A statement to my patients regarding Maine's new medical marijuana law

As you know, Maine voters in November 2009 approved an expansion of the existing law allowing patients with an eligible condition to acquire and possess a limited amount of marijuana for medicinal purposes if recommended by their physician. Some physicians are comfortable preparing the medical certificate required under the law, but I am not and I want to share with you my reasons for not participating in the new law.

1. Marijuana is still a Schedule I drug under federal law, meaning that it can be prescribed only in connection with a federal-approved research protocol. Recommending its use by a patient could jeopardize my DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) license.
2. I believe that the present drugs approved for patient use by the FDA (Federal Food & Drug Administration) are adequate for the many diseases, conditions, and symptoms of my patients. These products include Marinol, which contains a synthetic version of the active ingredients of marijuana.
3. Because marijuana is not manufactured under FDA protocols, the potency (strength), purity, and dosage cannot be assured, whether grown by the patient or a caregiver, or purchased at a state-licensed dispensary. This variability would make it impossible for me to know how the marijuana might affect you or interact with other medication you are taking.
4. I also remain concerned about the potential abuse of marijuana, both by our teenagers and by adults. I fear that this new law will lead to more abuse in our state, which already suffers from a significant drug problem.

I care about your health and the health of all my patients. I am willing to consider new approaches when there is scientific law behind them. I don't believe this is the case with marijuana presently, but I will keep an open mind.

I thought it was important for you to be aware of my thinking in this area. I appreciate the confidence you have placed in me as your physician.