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Health Secretary Adds Seven Medical Conditions to Medical Cannabis Program

(Santa Fe) – Health Secretary Dr. Alfredo Vigil announced today that the New Mexico Department of Health is adding seven new medical conditions to its Medical Cannabis Program. Dr. Vigil based his decision on the Department's Medical Advisory Board's recommendations, a review of scientific literature that shows the conditions could be helped by medical cannabis and the purpose of the Lynn and Erin Compassionate Use Act to provide relief from pain and suffering associated with debilitating medical conditions.

The seven new conditions are: painful peripheral neuropathy, intractable nausea/vomiting, severe anorexia/cachexia, hepatitis C infection currently receiving antiviral treatment, Crohn's disease, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder and Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's disease).

"It's important that we add conditions to our program only if we have scientific evidence that medical cannabis can provide relief to people who are suffering from those chronic conditions," Dr. Vigil said. "We are proud to reach this step where we can help even more people who are suffering needlessly."

The eight-member Medical Advisory Board had recommended approving eight conditions. Dr. Vigil did not approve fibromyalgia because there is not enough evidence that medical cannabis can be potential effective for that condition. Dr. Vigil accepted the Board's recommendation to deny petitions to add depression, chronic hepatitis C infection (without receiving treatment), environmental illness, brain dysfunction and estrogen replacement therapy.

The board-certified physicians who serve on the Medical Advisory Board will meet again on April 13 to review additional petitions and reconsider other petitions previously submitted. The Board had requested more information from people who petitioned to add chronic pain, bipolar disorder, arthritis, asthma/chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, chronic fatigue syndrome and chronic sinus congestion from blunt-facial trauma. People must submit petitions by March 13 to be considered at the April hearing. The Department is determining the location of the hearing.

Once a condition is approved, anyone with that medical condition can apply to the Medical Cannabis Program. In addition to the new conditions added, qualifying conditions are: cancer, glaucoma, multiple sclerosis, damage to the nervous tissue of the spinal cord with intractable spasticity, epilepsy and HIV/AIDS. Hospice patients may also be eligible.

To apply for the Medical Cannabis program or to petition for a new condition, look up <http://www.nmhealth.org/marijuana.html> or call the Medical Cannabis Program Coordinator at 505-827-2321.

For all conditions, physicians must certify that patients have an eligible condition, and the condition is debilitating and not helped by standard treatments. Physicians must also attest that they have informed patients of the potential risks and benefits associated with using medical cannabis for their condition. For post traumatic stress disorder, a psychiatrist must certify that patients have the disorder.

Since the Medical Cannabis Program began July 1, 2007, the Department of Health has approved 207 patient applications.

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