

Seniors, Opioids and Medical Cannabis

Policy Rationale for the Introduction of Medical Cannabis Products for Seniors (“MinnMed Silver”)

Policy Analysis: National

Seniors Forgotten Victims in Opioid Epidemic

“Often, the image of opioid addiction in America today is that of a working-age adult who first turned to painkillers for relief from a back injury. Or it is the young person who was introduced to oxycodone as a party drug, and now, with pills having become too expensive, has turned to heroin. Forgotten in the national conversation are the hundreds of thousands of senior citizens who are unwittingly being given duplicative and unsafe prescriptions of opioids and other controlled substances. These seniors face elevated risks for cognitive impairment, falls and fractures, and even overdose deaths. Between 1993 and 2012, inpatient hospital stays related to opioid overuse by Medicare beneficiaries rose more than ten percent annually and nearly one-third of all Medicare beneficiaries will receive at least one opioid prescription each year... Opioids can help to quickly control intense pain, but long-term use is known to become less effective in many patients. In fact, seniors who are receiving the most opioids aren't likely to be any healthier.”



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- **U.S. Senator Pat Toomey & U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown (May 14, 2016)**

The Economic Implications to Medicare are Significant

“Nearly 12 million Medicare recipients received a prescription for an opioid last year, said the Office of the Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. That's about one in four. The pills cost around \$4.1 billion.”

- **The Street (July 5, 2016)**

Medical Marijuana Laws Reduce Prescription Medication Use In Medicare Part D

“Using data on all prescriptions filled by Medicare Part D enrollees from 2010 to 2013, we found that the use of prescription drugs for which marijuana could serve as a clinical alternative fell significantly, once a medical marijuana law was implemented. National overall reductions in Medicare program and enrollee spending when states implemented medical marijuana laws were estimated to be \$165.2 million per year in 2013. The availability of medical marijuana has a significant effect on prescribing patterns and spending in Medicare Part D.”

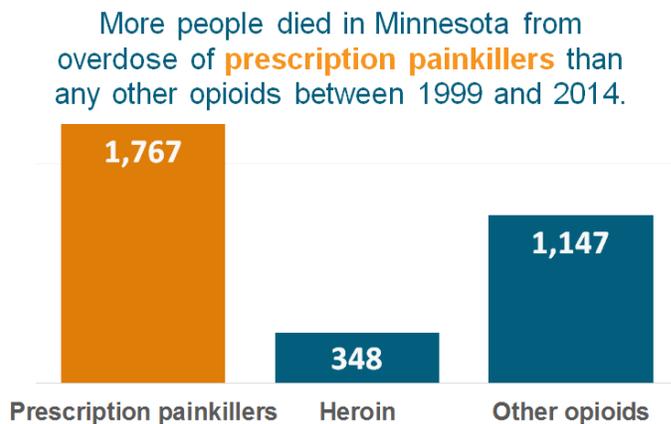


- Ashley C. Bradford and W. David Bradford, Health Affairs (July 2016)

Policy Analysis: Minnesota

Opioid Addiction in Minnesota

“Narcotic painkillers are being over-prescribed in Minnesota, leading to addiction, abuse and serious consequences. In the last decade, overdose deaths have more than doubled. Painkillers now cause more deaths than heroin and cocaine combined. We need to have a conversation as a society about how we can treat pain in ways that restores function...”



- Minnesota Department of Human Services Commissioner Lucinda Jesson (August 2015)

Minnesota’s Population is Aging

“The state demographer projects that between 2010 and 2030, the number of Minnesotans age 65 and older will double, from 685,000 to 1.3 million. The number of persons age 85 and older (who tend to need long-term care) will nearly double, growing to 163,000 and then double again by 2050, rising to 324,000 persons. By 2020, there will be more people age 65 or older than school-aged children in Minnesota.”

- Minnesota Board on Aging, State Plan (FY 2015 – 2017)

Minnesota's Seniors Are Underrepresented in the Medical Cannabis Program



Minnesota seniors, ages 65 and above, are underrepresented in the State's medical cannabis program. Specifically, seniors are 18% of the State's adult population, ages 18 and above, but account for only 12% of the active adult patients in the State's medical cannabis program.

- **Analysis of MN Department of Health's Medical Cannabis Program Update (July 2016)**

AS AN EMERGENCY MEDICINE PHYSICIAN, I SAW FIRSTHAND THAT OPIOIDS ARE OVERUSED, FREQUENTLY ABUSED AND TOO OFTEN RESULT IN FATAL OVERDOSES

**Kyle Kingsley, M.D.
Founder & CEO, Vireo Health**

Medical Cannabis Products for Seniors

MinnMed Silver

Based on patient feedback and policy research, Minnesota Medical Solutions will launch a "MinnMed Silver" medical cannabis product line designed to serve the unique medical needs of Minnesota's seniors.

The first planned product in the MinnMed Silver line will be a prefilled vaporizer cartridge with small amounts of THC. This product could benefit seniors that suffer from intractable pain but do not have prior experience with cannabis.



The MinnMed Silver prefilled vaporizer cartridge will be available to patients in August of 2016 at an attractive price, contingent upon the approval of Minnesota Department of Health.