



## **One Call Examines Ongoing Controversy around the Use of Medical Marijuana in Workers' Compensation**

*RIMS Session Outlines Latest Developments in Legalization, Clinical Research and Potential Policy Changes Surrounding Medical Marijuana*

**JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (May 2, 2017)** – Small-scale clinical trials have shown promising results in medical marijuana's ability to treat chronic pain. However, marijuana remains illegal at the federal level, preventing broad use of marijuana as an alternative to addictive and dangerous painkillers. To outline these and other complex issues surrounding the medical marijuana debate, Kevin Glennon, RN, BSN, vice president of clinical programs at One Call Care Management ("One Call"), was selected to deliver a featured presentation at the annual [Risk Management Society \(RIMS\) Conference](#).

In his session, "Controversy Continues: Medical Marijuana in Workers' Compensation," Glennon informed risk managers and workers' compensation professionals about the latest developments regarding legalization, clinical studies and potential policy changes of medical marijuana under the Trump administration.

"Today, controversy continues due to the discrepancy between state and federal laws," said Glennon. "At the federal level, marijuana is illegal because it's classified as a Schedule 1 drug under the Controlled Substance Act (CSA). However, to date, 29 states and the District of Columbia have legalized medical marijuana. In addition, 83 percent of Americans now believe doctors should be able to recommend medical marijuana to patients, according to a recent Yahoo/Marist poll."

Last year, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) was asked to reconsider its classification of marijuana, but it decided against changing it and wanted stronger evidence of marijuana's therapeutic value. Toward this end, the DEA increased the number of entities registered to grow and supply marijuana to researchers. This will increase availability for clinical trials, but there are still significant hoops to jump through to conduct marijuana research.

These obstacles come at a time when the industry needs alternative treatments for pain, noted Glennon. Last year, *Time* magazine reported that overdose deaths in the U.S. involving opioids (prescription painkillers and heroin) quadrupled since 1999, and opioid abuse was costing \$72 billion in medical costs alone each year.

"Due to the types of accidents and injuries that occur in workers' compensation, the industry experiences a high incidence of chronic pain cases, which makes it vulnerable to opioid abuse," added Glennon. "With more states legalizing medical marijuana, however, we're seeing reports of patients actually turning down prescription painkillers like Oxycodone in favor of medical marijuana."

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Studies have shown a correlation between states legalizing medical marijuana and a subsequent decrease in painkiller prescriptions, opioid use and deaths from opioid overdoses.

While President Trump is sympathetic toward patients using medical marijuana for serious ailments, his administration may heighten enforcement against recreational use. If a federal crackdown occurs, even users of medical marijuana are technically in violation of federal law. A user's employment, access to government benefits and parental rights could be in jeopardy if marijuana is detected in drug-screening tests. As a result, the threat of increased enforcement may set back legalization efforts in other states. And, several marijuana-reclassification bills that have been proposed at the federal level are now stalled.

"It's a catch-22. Marijuana may be an effective alternative to opioids, but researchers are significantly restricted in being able to prove this theory, as long as marijuana is classified as a Substance 1 drug," noted Glennon. "The fastest road to reclassification may be through FDA approval. If there is enough clinical evidence for the FDA to approve a marijuana-based drug, the DEA would move to reclassify."

In the meantime, the industry should continue to monitor legalization efforts and new case law affecting our states, as well as follow best practice guidelines established by organizations like the [American College for Occupational & Environmental Medicine](#) (ACOEM).

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#### **About One Call Care Management**

One Call is the nation's leading provider of specialized solutions to the workers' compensation industry. One Call has six locations across the United States with its corporate headquarters located in Jacksonville, Florida. One Call's solutions enable faster, more efficient and more cost-effective claims resolution with a focus on injured workers' needs across the continuum of care. One Call provides reliable, consistent connections to care with expertise in high-end diagnostics, physical therapy and transportation services, post-discharge home care and durable medical equipment, dental and doctor specialty services, complex care management, and the language services required for today's multicultural workforce. For more information, visit [www.onecallcm.com](http://www.onecallcm.com). For regular updates, follow One Call on Twitter at [@onecallcm](https://twitter.com/onecallcm).

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