



Walgreens cannabis post creates buzz

Pharmacy chain says info on blog not endorsement

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CHICAGO TRIBUNE | BUSINESS | MAY 3, 2016

A recent post on Walgreens' blog raised eyebrows in the medical marijuana community.

Titled "Clarifying Clinical Cannabis," the post, written by a resident pharmacist at Walgreens and the University of Illinois at Chicago, isn't an endorsement.

"The content is strictly informative, and nowhere do we take any stance on the issue. It was developed to address some of the questions we've received from patients and customers through various channels," Walgreens spokesman Jim Cohn said in an email.

Few national brands have been willing to broach the topic. Washington, D.C., and 24 states, including Illinois, have approved the use of medical cannabis for certain health conditions, but marijuana remains illegal under federal law and is still classified as a Schedule 1 drug -- a category that includes heroin.

Alan Brochstein, founder of 420 Investor, an online community for investors in the cannabis industry, at first thought it was a hoax because it was "too good to be true."

"They're speaking honestly, sharing facts and links to studies," said Brochstein, who said he couldn't recall a major company providing similar information.

A disclaimer on the post states the Deerfield-based pharmacy chain is not a licensed medical marijuana provider.

The author, Dahlia Sultan, noted marijuana has not yet been approved for national use by the Food and Drug Administration, and research has indicated it may impair lungs, memory and judgment.

"However, research has also shown marijuana provides pain relief in ways traditional pain medicines don't," wrote Sultan, who declined to comment and referred questions to Walgreens.

Feliza Castro, CEO and founder of The Healing Clinic, a medical marijuana patient advocacy center with offices in Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood and Highland Park, said some groups such as the Epilepsy Foundation and National Cancer Institute have shared information about the topic, but many have been reluctant to address it.

"In the larger scheme of things, the fact that they allowed it to be published means something," said Brochstein, of Houston, who wrote about the blog post on New Cannabis Ventures, an industry website. "When you see an institution that could be adversarial allowing publication of material that's certainly not negative and could be positive, that's pretty cool."

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Newspaper-style recreation from the supplied ProQuest full text; not an original print scan.

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FELIZA CASTRO | CEO AND FOUNDER, THE HEALING CLINIC

The paragraph above is the article excerpt selected by ProQuest for its abstract. It highlights Feliza Castro's patient advocacy and the need for wider discussion of medical cannabis.

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Abstract

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Full text

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