

**Sigma's VIRTUAL 31st International Nursing Research Congress (Wednesday, 22 July - Friday, 24 July)**

## **The Legalization of Cannabis in Canada: Reflections on Stigma in Nursing**

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### **Purpose:**

The legalization of cannabis in 2018 in Canada prompted a need for education for nurses (Canadian Nurses Association, 2018). With grant support from Health Canada's Substance Use and Addiction Program (SUAP), the Canadian Nurses Association undertook stakeholder consultation with nurses across designations and settings, in Halifax, Vancouver, Yellowknife, Toronto and Montreal, in assess learning needs. Stigma towards cannabis users within the profession was identified in all settings as a barrier to patient care. Nurses requested reflective learning tools and ways to change their language. One nurse leader shared, "Nurses are carrying their paradigms. Cannabis was illegal, now legalized, and they're having a hard time wrapping their head around that. What it used to be, what it is now."

### **Methods:**

Nurse leaders who attended a Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) Cannabis Think Tank completed a questionnaire prior to participating in a voluntary Field Trip to one of four local Cannabis shops in Ottawa, Canada. A debrief was conducted after the Field trip, as well as the Post-questionnaire.

During the same meeting, a current "Reflecting on Stigma" tool from the Canadian Addiction Peer Support Association and the Canadian Center for Substance use and Addiction (CAPSA & CCSA, 2019) as well as a Lexicon of Compassionate Language (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2019) was piloted as a possible tool and/or resource.

### **Results:**

Nurses struggled to come to consensus on the tools, some saw the tools as leading, others as personal.

The lack of consensus about these resources generated an awareness of the need for a sensitive methodology for stigma awareness within the profession. Subsequently, in collaboration with the patient advocacy group CAPSA, and supported by literature such as Goffman (1963) and Bos (2013) a nursing group-based knowledge translation tool has been created as a means to safely discuss stigma and support each other to change our language.

### **Conclusion:**

The legalization of cannabis has opened a door to broaden and deepen nurses' awareness of bias towards those who use substances. A stigma knowledge translation tool has been developed to improve patients' access to care.

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**Title:**

## The Legalization of Cannabis in Canada: Reflections on Stigma in Nursing

### **Keywords:**

Cannabis, Nursing and Stigma

### **Abstract Summary:**

Nurses know stigma impacts patients' ability to access health care, yet stigma remains. Through findings from a Nursing Learning Needs Assessment conducted upon the legalization of cannabis in Canada, it is apparent nurses want to take responsibility for stigma and are looking for opportunities to reflect and engage differently.

### **References:**

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### First Primary Presenting Author

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**Author Summary:** Dr. Sarah Flogen has over 30 years experience as a Registered Nurse in Ontario, Canada. She left clinical leadership work in the field of mental health to work with the Canadian Nurses Association on this complex topic of cannabis legalization and the implications for nursing education, leadership and practice.

### Second Secondary Presenting Author

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**Author Summary:** Lia Sanzone received her nursing degrees from McGill University and obtained a graduate certificate in health care management from Université Laval. In 2015, she became the Director of the Nursing Peer Mentorship Program (NPMP) and a consultant for national and international nursing schools. In 2016, she was the recipient of the Excellence in Academic Advising by the Dean of Students & the McGill University Faculty of Medicine Excellence in Teaching Award.