



in Mountain Maryland

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From the Cumberland Expressway, a large sign is clearly visible: “Allegany Medical Marijuana Dispensary.” What is this newcomer to the medical scene, and how did it come to be in Cumberland, Maryland?

Basically, the combination of three events in 2014 has resulted in this important new medical resource for the people of Western Maryland.

One: Dr. Sajal Roy opened a specialty pharmacy located in Maryland, Louisiana, and Texas, and serving all fifty states that now generates over 125 million in revenue annually. That business, Factor One Source/FAST Pharmacy, provides medications for patients with hemophilia; immune disorders such as multiple sclerosis (MS), rheumatoid arthritis (RA), and psoriasis; and addiction disorders.

Two: During this time, Sajal’s mother was struggling with the effects of cancer treatment, and he was “astonished” to observe that a few drops of THC oil under her tongue gave her pain relief and the ability to sleep without the need for opiates or sleeping medication.

Three: After much study and debate, the State of Maryland decided to legalize medical marijuana, and established a Maryland Medical Cannabis Commission (MMCC) to develop regulations and oversee the industry.

Thus, Sajal became interested in the medical marijuana business that was being planned in Maryland for both professional and personal reasons. Operating a dispensary would draw on the skills he had already developed in his business, medical marijuana would serve a similar population as his



Allegany Medical Marijuana Dispensary is located off I-68, Exit 43A in Cumberland, Maryland.

specialty pharmacy and he had seen firsthand how effective cannabis could be.

Convinced that this field would be a good fit, he decided to apply for a license to dispense medical marijuana.

His application was approved in 2016. Sajal and co-owners George Merling and Greg Pappas selected and renovated a building, employees received specialized online training through THC University, and the dispensary opened in Cumberland on December 1, 2017.

The Allegany County Medical Marijuana Dispensary has the distinction of being the second dispensary to open in Maryland. Budtender Ian Beattie notes ruefully that another dispensary “beat us by a day or so.”

The first day at the dispensary would have to be counted a success; to serve all the patients, the place had to stay



Ian Beattie, budtender at Allegany Medical Marijuana Dispensary, provides individualized attention for patients and caregivers, with the best product solutions to meet their needs.

open until 3:30 a.m., and a community began to form immediately. One person even brought in pizza for others who were waiting. Soon, the dispensary settled into its regular hours, Tuesday-Friday 10-6 and Saturday 11-7.

Many people think of marijuana use as similar to alcoholism, with people smoking joints and staying stoned all the time. In reality, medical marijuana is dispensed in a professional setting. It can be used in a variety of forms, does not usually cause a feeling of being high, and has vital therapeutic value for patients suffering from a variety of conditions.

Cannabis contains dozens of compounds called cannabinoids. One of them, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is responsible for the feeling of being high when it is consumed in sufficient quantity. Some other cannabinoids such as cannabidiol (CBD) do not have this effect and can even counteract it when used in combination with THC. The essential plant oils (terpenes) in cannabis also have therapeutic effect used alone or in conjunction with cannabinoids.

Plants are tested for contaminants such as heavy metals, pesticides, and anaerobic material. Plants that do not pass

this testing can be sent to a processor where the undesirable material is removed and extracts can be produced.

As Ian points out, marijuana is a natural plant rather than a synthetic formulation, and growers have developed thousands of strains of marijuana. Different types have different characteristics. Some tend to make users more alert, while others tend to be relaxing. People who are licensed to grow, process, and dispense medical marijuana are very knowledgeable about its characteristics and uses, and budtenders can help patients find the right solutions for their own situations.

Like Sajal's mother, some patients use medical marijuana to relieve pain and promote restful sleep. Cannabis is a versatile medicine. Among other uses, it can stimulate or suppress appetite, quell nausea, alleviate symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), improve focus for individuals who have attention deficit disorder (ADD) or attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD), regulate blood sugar, and aid in treatment of glaucoma.



Cannabis is a versatile medicine with a variety of supplies available and dispensed in many forms.

One of medical marijuana's benefits is that it can reduce or eliminate the need to use other medicines. Ian describes a patient with severe muscle spasms who was reluctantly planning to return to narcotics use when he found that cannabis was effective in lessening the spasms. Some people with MS who take many medications have found that they can replace some of their other prescriptions with cannabis. This can lead to far fewer side effects and lower the risk of addiction.

Cannabis can indeed be smoked in several ways, including via cigarettes, vape cartridges, bong, or dab rigs. Allegany Medical Marijuana Dispensary can demonstrate and provide supplies for these methods. However, some people, such as those using oxygen, cannot smoke. Others don't want to smoke. And smoking isn't the best means of treating some conditions. For these reasons, cannabis can be dispensed in many other forms. It can be a liquid that is squirted into the mouth or incorporated into food. It can come as a salve or lotion to be applied to skin; in fact, cannabis shows great promise as a healing agent for wounds, psoriasis, and similar problems. It can be taken as a tablet, or worn as a patch.

Some people who become patients have prior knowledge of marijuana, while others have very little or no experience. Allegany Medical Marijuana Dispensary provides individualized attention for all patients and caregivers, and sponsors classes for everyone who wants to learn more about the use of cannabis.

To date, the Allegany Medical Marijuana Dispensary has served over 1000 unique patients. Though Sajal makes sure to reserve time for his wife Holly and infant daughter Savita, he wants to extend his expertise to more locations. He is in the process of applying for licenses to open medical marijuana dispensaries in Louisiana and Arkansas.

The State of Maryland is also moving forward. A question about the lack of diversity among growers has led to legislative discussion of possible remedies. Other legislation being considered relates to increasing from 10 grams to one ounce the amount of marijuana a person can possess without being charged with a felony, and legalization of recreational use of marijuana.

While these issues are being resolved, over 26,000 registered patients in Maryland are finding relief for various ailments through the use of medical marijuana, with the confidence that the product they are using has been professionally tested, labeled, and dispensed. Learning more about this helpful and carefully regulated treatment option has changed the minds of many community members who initially opposed legalization of medical marijuana.

Ian says that he enjoys being employed at the Allegany Medical Marijuana Dispensary—the staff are treated well—but the most gratifying part of the job for him is to see the difference this medicine makes for people who are suffering. Sajal concurs: “My staff and I love hearing the life changing success stories, and we are happy to be a part of our patients' lives.”

Allegany Medical Marijuana Dispensary
100 Beall St., Cumberland, MD 21502
alcommd.com, 888-446-3420
Tuesday-Friday 10-6, Saturday 11-7