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Jefferson creates medical cannabis education and research center

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Thomas Jefferson University has created the Center for Medical Cannabis Education & Research.

The Center City health sciences university said it is the first such institution to establish a center that will provide unbiased information and guidance to clinicians and patients about the medical uses of marijuana and cannabinoid focused-therapies.

Dr. Stephen K. Klasko, the president and CEO of Thomas Jefferson University and Jefferson Health, said the center – part of

the university's Institute of Emerging Health Professions – “signals the institution's dedication to embrace the ever-evolving nature of healthcare.”

He added that understanding and researching “new cutting-edge methods for the treatment of disease” is a fundamental goal at Jefferson.

The center will be led by Dr. Charles V. Pollack, the institute's director and the associate provost for innovation in education at Jefferson. The center's mission will be to advance the scientific basis,

collaborative research efforts and educational opportunities associated with the clinical use of cannabis-derived therapies, while also influencing social innovation and patient experience.

“The ratio of hype and advocacy to scientific knowledge in the field of medical marijuana is too high,” Pollack said. “Patients and their caregivers want new approaches to illness management and pain relief, but their exposure to under-tested and un-validated treatments should be limited and carefully managed and monitored while a stronger evidence base is developed.”

Pennsylvania in April became what was then the 24th state in the country to legalize medical marijuana.

The legislation, signed into law on April 17, allows for medical marijuana to be used by patients with a “serious medical condition” such as cancer, Crohn's disease, Parkinson's disease, epilepsy, and glaucoma. The Pennsylvania Department of Health is now in the process of developing regulations to govern the program, which is not expected to become operational until 2018.

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