



## Why Canada Just Became A World Leader On Medical Marijuana And PTSD

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Canada is taking the lead on studying marijuana as a way to treat post-traumatic stress disorder.

PTSD has become a hot-button issue among marijuana advocates. Right now, Canada and some American states including Michigan and Nevada recognize cannabis as a drug that can help veterans, first responders and others suffering from PTSD treat their symptoms. But New York, Illinois and other states that have legalized medical marijuana don't include PTSD as a qualified condition. And Veterans Affairs prohibits V.A. physicians from prescribing cannabis to American veterans.

But a landmark study by Canadian researchers could broaden and improve the use of marijuana for PTSD treatment. On Mar. 16, Apollo Research - a network of Canadian medical cannabis clinics that prescribe medical marijuana - announced that it's undertaking a cross-country study to investigate the effects marijuana has on patients with PTSD.

"This research study is a passion project and it is timely given the national attention that is being given to Veterans, First Responders and to mental health awareness overall," said Bryan Hendin, President of Apollo Applied Research - in a press release. "There has been a lot of anecdotal evidence [in favor of using cannabis to treat PTSD] and now it's time for validated research."

The study will also investigate which strains are best for treating PTSD: "We have learned a lot...on what strains and prescribing methods work best for our chronic pain patients," said Hendin. The PTSD project will aim to do the same. And while Apollo is spearheading research, they hope to partner with Veterans Affairs Canada in the near future.

Canada poised to overtake American researchers

The project could make Canada a world leader in this field of research, outpacing studies in United States that are hampered by America's rigid drug laws.

"Currently in the United States, studies are stalled due to the lack of federal approval of using cannabis for testing," noted Hendin. "Strains of medical marijuana are classified as a Schedule 1 drug, which is tightly controlled by the Food and Drug Administration. This presents a challenge for conducting studies with American veterans who are struggling with PTSD. Canada is positioned to be a leader in medical cannabis research."

That bureaucratic stalemate hindering American cannabis research isn't likely to improve any time soon. Groups like the Cato Institute and others groups have have called on the American government to reschedule cannabis. But the DEA has refused to budge on the issue. And the Obama administration has decided not to take action on marijuana unless legislation comes from Congress, where numerous bills that would liberalize the nation's laws have stalled, including the CARERS Act - a bipartisan bill that would change the drug scheduling and recognize the value of medical marijuana.

But further research such as the Apollo study could pressure the American government to recognize the medical value of cannabis, and to help veterans and other patients with PTSD gain access to medical marijuana.