

Press release

More evidence for cannabis therapy!

- **Algea Care is launching an evidence initiative: the focus will be on the common ailments of depression and chronic neuropathy pain**
- **5 years since the “cannabis as medicine” law: access to cannabis therapy remains difficult for patients**
- **Legalization 2.0 – first medical treatment, now recreational use?**
- **Algea Care opens treatment centres in Muenster and Passau**

Frankfurt/Main, February 3, 2022 – Algea Care, the first and leading Germany-wide platform for telemedicine-supported and evidence-based medical treatment with medical cannabis, today announced a new evidence initiative that will immediately apply innovative approaches to promote evidence-based therapy with medical cannabis. Through research partnerships with renowned university institutions, the Frankfurt-based company will provide data - anonymised in accordance with current scientific standards - on patients in various indications who are currently undergoing treatment with medical cannabis. Each research team will then compile detailed scientific evaluations and assessments of the improvements for each individual symptom and then publish their findings in scientific journals. Furthermore, it is also planned to present the research findings during lectures at international congresses.

The first research project will focus on depression, which, according to estimates by the German Ministry of Health, affects approximately 16-20% of Germans at least once in their lifetime.¹ Algea Care will provide a university training hospital in North-Rhine Westphalia with the anonymized data of initially 65 patients with medically diagnosed chronic depression who are undergoing cannabis treatment for scientific evaluation. With a further university clinic in northern Germany, the project planning stage will soon be concluded and the anonymized data of initially 100 patients with chronic neuropathic pain, who had previously not responded to medical treatment but have shown significant improvement during treatment with cannabis, will be made available for a research work.

“Our pioneering role as a platform for evidence-based therapy using medical cannabis is something we take very seriously,” says Dr med. Julian Wichmann, CEO of Algea Care. “We see these targeted partnerships as an excellent strategy to address physician scepticism in accepting a promising, but inadequately researched, form of therapy using scientific evidence. This is also evidenced in our patient-centred approach, which supports patients who are often stigmatized in their efforts to gain improved access to an alternative and proven effective and safe medicinal product in the long term. This is also why we have numerous research collaborations planned.”

Access to cannabis therapy remains difficult for patients

The reason for this significant expansion of Algea Care’s strategy is the realization that, 5 years after the legalization of medically supervised cannabis therapy in Germany (“cannabis as medicine” law enacted on 10th March 2017), the provision of care for patients still lags far

¹ Estimate of the Germany Ministry of Health published on their own website
<https://www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/themen/praevention/gesundheitsgefahren/depression.html>

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behind the potential provided by this law. Experts estimate that less than 2% of German physicians prescribe medical cannabis and that very few pharmacies have experience with cannabis prescriptions or have such products in stock.

Surveys by the statutory health insurance providers² for the period January to September 2021 record only 262,996 prescriptions of medicinal cannabis products, therefore no more than 350,000 prescriptions can be expected for all potential indications in the entire year. In contrast, there are almost 16,000,500 opioid prescriptions per year³ – 47 times more (!) and primarily for those classified as pain patients. The overview of individual cases makes it very clear that despite having notably better tolerability, having fewer side effects, and being a more efficient form of therapy, medical cannabis therapy is still not being sufficiently used.

Legalization 2.0 – first medical treatment, now recreational use?

The new German government is also committed to legalizing cannabis for recreational use during this legislative period. As experts in medical cannabis therapy, Algea Care calls for the lessons learned from the legalization of medical cannabis to be taken into consideration in this new plan. For example, it must be ensured that staff in pharmacies and specialist stores are suitably qualified to allow them to provide help and advice to users thereby minimizing possible health risks.

Above all, however, the existing problems and treatment access problems affecting medical therapy should no longer be ignored. As Dr Wichman notes: “The patient is often still not at the centre of medical cannabis therapy. There are clear deficits in patient access to experienced physicians and medicinal products. Simultaneously, delivery problems and quality variations in pharmacies remain significant problems, which raises major questions in the context of product availability when recreational use is legalized.

During the last 5 years, it has become clear that the provision of care for chronic patients has not improved despite the intentions of the legislature following the legalization of cannabis for medical use in 2017. Alongside the social stigma and the uncertainty of physicians regarding this treatment option, there are other structural questions that have arisen:

- Is it not contradictory for the legislature to place the significant obstacle of requiring a special narcotic drug prescription, even for cannabis products with a very low content of psychoactive substances (e.g., 0.1% THC), while the legalization of medically unsupervised recreational cannabis with a much higher THC content is being considered?
- Why is the legislature blocking improved access for chronic patients to medical cannabis using the modern and far simpler ePrescription of medical cannabis to be presented to specialist mail-order pharmacies? Instead, special narcotic prescriptions must be presented in original form directly to pharmacies.
- Why do regulatory authorities and police rarely undergo appropriate training for the compatibility of medical cannabis treatment and the driving of a vehicle? Is a special

² GKV GAMSI Sonderbeilage: Verordnungen von Cannabinoidhaltigen Fertigarzneimitteln‘

³ Kassenärztliche Bundesvereinigung und Wissenschaftliches Institut der PKV (Deutscher Bundestag Drucksache 19/15967 vom 13.12.2019)

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type of supplementary driving licence necessary for patients undergoing this type of treatment? The everyday problems facing chronic patients undergoing cannabis therapy, particularly regarding their ability to drive and therefore their mobility, still pose major challenges which should now be removed.

Targeted expansion of the therapy centre network

To strengthen the long-term availability of therapy nationwide for patients, Algea Care is expanding its own network of specialist therapy centres. On 15th January, a further centre was opened in Muenster at Alten Dorfstraße 3 in and, at the beginning of February, our 20th treatment centre was opened at Emil-Brichta-Straße 3, Passau, Bavaria.

Since the opening of the first therapy centre in Frankfurt am Main on 15th October 2020, in little over 15 months, an almost complete nationwide network with 20 cities has been built: Frankfurt/Main, Munich, Berlin, Cologne, Hamburg, Stuttgart, Nuremberg, Leipzig, Karlsruhe, Regensburg, Kassel, Hannover, Saarbruecken, Konstanz, Augsburg, Dortmund, Wuerzburg, Freiburg, Muenster and Passau. This is therefore of great importance for the efficient provision of patient care because after initial patient registration on the internet platform www.algeacare.com, the initial consultation with the physician providing treatment must take place in person. Then, if medically justifiable, further therapy can be carried out via video consultation.

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About Algea Care

Algea Care is the nation's first and leading platform for telemedicine-supported and evidence-based medical treatment with medical cannabis. As a result of the approval of the medical use of cannabis in 2017, the company, founded in Frankfurt in 2020, has pioneered medical treatment using specific hemp components, e.g., cannabinoid oil (CBD). Algea Care is aimed at patients for whom conventional therapy was unsuccessful and who are now looking to natural medical products, such as cannabis, to treat their chronic illnesses and ailments (e.g., chronic pain, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, Crohn's disease, depression, ADHD, sleep problems). Achieving long-term improvements in patient quality of life is the focus of the efforts of the more than 220-strong Algea Care team.

Via the website www.algeacare.com, patients can quickly and easily request treatment and - after a careful medical examination of the patient's documents - book an appointment at one of the currently 23 therapy centers in Germany. Physicians specially trained in the use of cannabis therapy and other natural medicinal products provide consultation and treatment. After the initial appointment at one of our therapy centres, all follow-up appointments, if medically justifiable, can take place as a video consultation. Using state-of-art telemedical technology, Algea Care provides patients with a comprehensive range of services: our expert team is on hand to help patients schedule appointments and compile medical histories, to offer therapy support or to answer questions on medication and other related topics.