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INTERNATIONAL

MEDICAL CANNABIS: IS PANAMA READY?

A social study

By: **Engr. Pauline Garcerán**
Dr. Ericka Stahl

REPORT OF RESULTS

THE AUTHORS



Chris Bolton
Founder and CEO
TheraCann International



In just a span of five short years, the cannabis sector has become fully commercialized and truly international. Technologies, record keeping tools and compliance standards have been put in place to ensure that cannabis is medical grade, can be used safely, reproduced effectively, and with full traceability to meet the requirements of the medical community, international quality regulators and banking compliance officers.”

“The cannabis industry is growing exponentially and it's opening doors to opportunities for the scientific and medical community. The education of public and medical professionals is imperative for the proper utilization of the cannabis plant and responsible exploration of its benefits.



Pauline Garcerán Camargo
Plant Sciences Technician
TheraCann International



Ericka Stahl
Physician
M. Bio - Naturist Medicine



Misinformation and fear of abuse are two barriers that have prevented patients from including cannabis as a treatment option. Education is the only route for a country to have a proper and responsible use of medical cannabis.”



ABOUT US

TheraCann International (formerly known as Benchmark Labs) is a company founded in Canada in 2004 by Chris Bolton with headquarters in Panama City, Panama.

With more than 30 years of experience, the TheraCann International team offers consulting and turn-key solutions for cultivation, processing, distribution and sales of pharmaceutical products derived from cannabis plant.

From seed to patient, TheraCann International has developed technologies that dramatically reduce the root causes of variation between crops, ensuring a standard quality of the product and consumer's safety.

MISSION

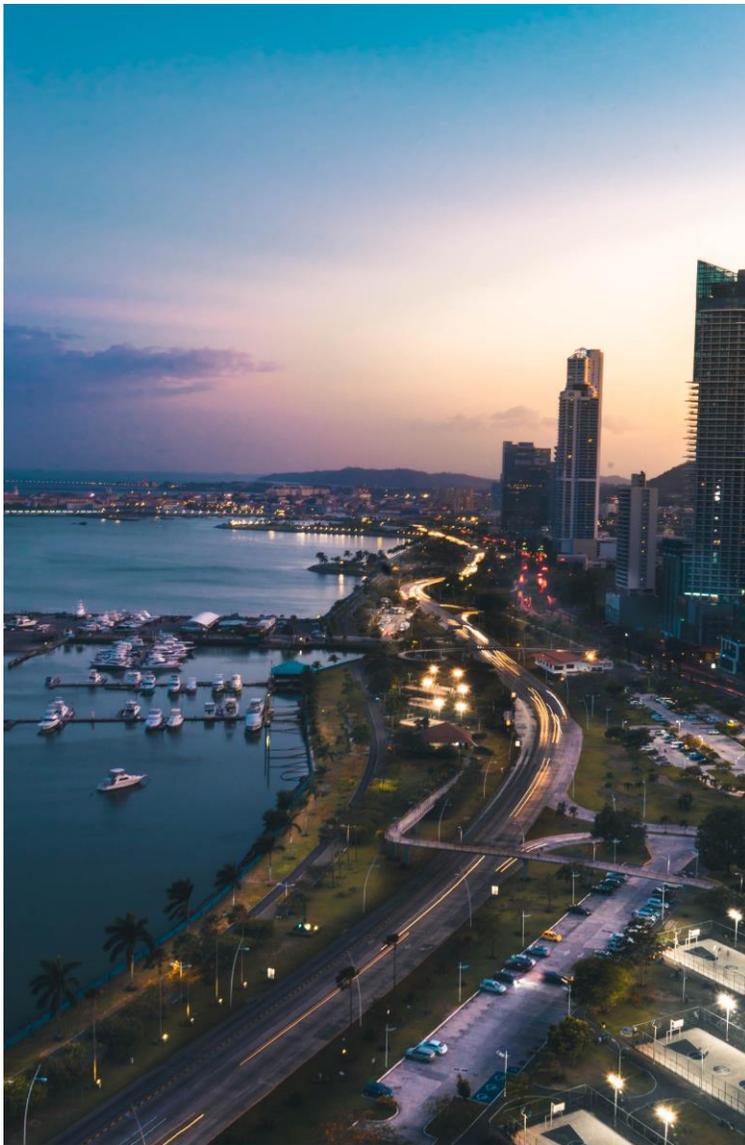
To stabilize, and rapidly develop, a compliant and secure global cannabis sector through innovation, education and commitment to resource and social sustainability.

VISION

To be the leading global Cannabis Company through innovation, education and social change.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TheraCann International is committed to public education in Panama and globally in relation to medical grade/commercial cannabis. With the participation of Dr. Ericka Stahl, we took the initiative to evaluate the level of knowledge on the subject in a group of 1737 people in the Republic of Panama.



Panama City, Panama.

The objective of the study is to offer educational tools to all people seeking guidance about medical cannabis, so that they can develop their own criterion based in scientific evidence and previous studies.

The survey was done through multiple media outlets to a sample of 1737 people.

87.3% (1514) of the participants were identified as Panamanians with 82.% having an academic degree of bachelor or higher.

Panamanian legislation for the regulation of cannabis production that is compliant with pharmaceutical requirements and standards is currently being evaluated.

In this report we will detail the results obtained and the vision of TheraCann International to be part of a movement to eliminate the stigma and misinformation about this topic.

LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE OF PANAMANIANIANS ABOUT BENEFITS OR EFFECTS OF CANNABIS

Cannabis is a plant from the *Cannabaceae* family with three recognized species: Sativa, Indica and Ruderalis.

Its therapeutical properties are due to the large variety of chemical components (more than 421) including terpenes, hydrocarbons, carbohydrates, fatty acids, amino acids, nitrogen compounds and approximately 60 different cannabinoids.

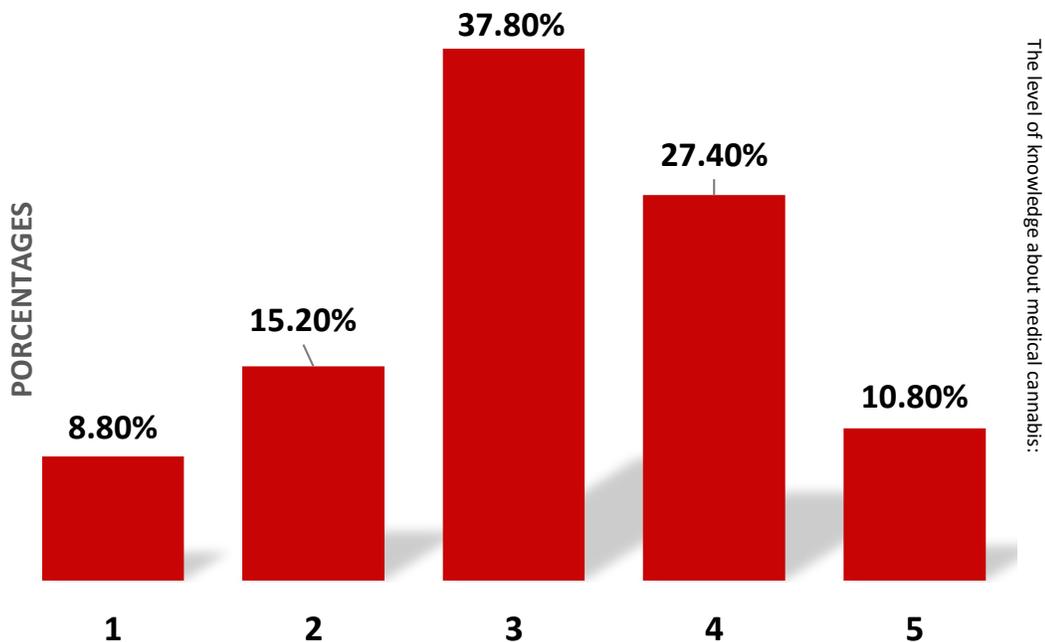
Cannabis will play an important role in the future of public health, agriculture and economy of the country.

The regulated and controlled uses of cannabis are very new and have much room for improvement: the plant offers many benefits for health and quality of life for those who use it; its high nutritional value in small amounts could represent a relief for

malnutrition.

The demographic profile of the 1733 volunteers that participated in this survey were from all ages, adults, men (895), women (824), where 82.9% had an academic degree of bachelor or higher and 11% work in healthcare.

Participants of this survey were asked to make a self assesment about their level of knowledge about benefits or effects of cannabis. 37.8% (643) of the 1702 people that replied consider their level of knowledge as medium (3) and 8.8% (149) don't know about the topic (1).



CANNABIS AND HEALTH

In 1937 the use of marijuana was prohibited. During the last 60 years the demand for treatment by the patient community has been increasing.



Historically, cannabis has been used as a medical treatment since around 2700 B.C. in China.

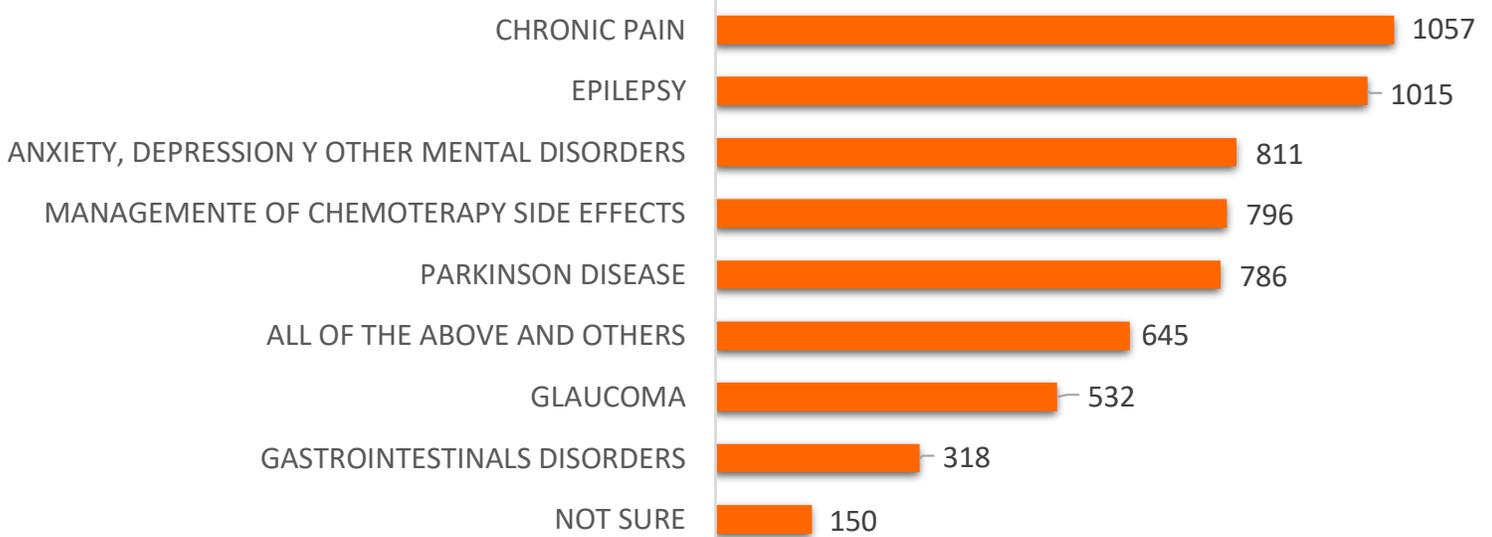
Its benefits and long-term effects are still being studied around the world.

Scientific evidence has been published about the benefits of cannabis medicines in certain conditions such as refractory epilepsy, anxiety, depression, glaucoma, chronic pain, among others.

18.2% (316) of the surveyed were not sure about the existence of enough evidence, while 4.8% (83) said there is no evidence at all.

The 1733 participants of the survey were asked to select the conditions that they consider could be treated with cannabis as an alternative medicine.

The results indicated that the sample population is generally aware of the conditions that can be treated with cannabis, since only 150 of them responded that they were unsure about the options provided.



Which conditions do you believe may be treated with medical cannabis globally?

CANNABIS DEPENDENCE

65% of the 1736 surveyed people confirmed having used at any moment of their lives, a product derived from the plant (oils, creams, vaporizers).

Does cannabis have addictive properties?

Cannabis can cause psychological dependence if abused over long periods. However, the risk for dependence is far lower than other commonly used substances.

35% of the 1736 surveyed people that replied that consumers can become addicted to this substance.

THE RISK OF CANNABIS DEPENDENCE IS LOWER THAN THE RISK OF COFFEE DEPENDENCE.

CANNABIS TOXICOLOGY

About 70237 people died in the United States in 2017 for drug overdose.

10.3% (178) of the 1735 people who replied to our survey believe that is possible to have a lethal overdose as a result of cannabis consumption and 19.1% (331) didn't know this information.

AS OF DATE, NO LETHAL OVERDOSE HAS BEEN REGISTERED DUE TO UNMEASURED CANNABIS CONSUMPTION.



Do you think that cannabis has addictive properties and/or can cause users to develop addiction?

Cannabis intoxication most often does not require medical management and will self-resolve. The most common adverse effects of cannabis include physical and psychological symptoms such as: dizziness, tachycardia, changes in blood pressure, panic attacks, paranoia, dysphoria.

CANNABIS INDUSTRY: REGULATIONS AND LEGISLATIONS

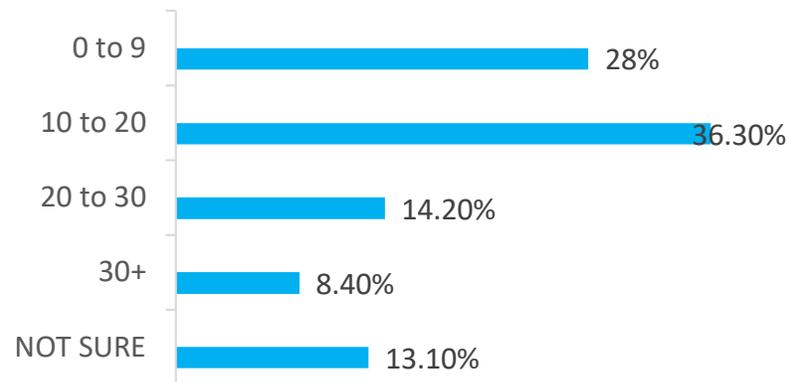
The growing speed of Canna-Business has called the attention of the regulatory bodies in different countries.

Annual cannabis demand worldwide was estimated to be \$344.4 billion USD in 2018.

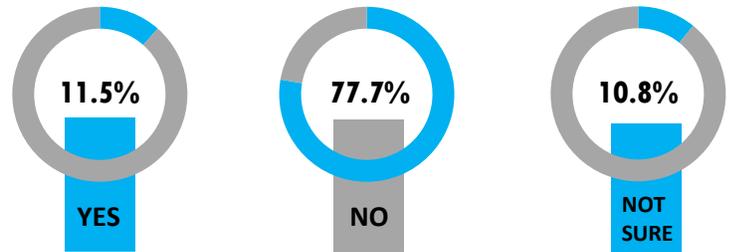
28% of the 1695 people who completed the survey believe that cannabis is illegal globally in any form.

Medical cannabis industry vision is to become a transparent, regulated and traceable market, ensuring product quality and protecting the users regarding cannabinoids content, terpenes and microbiological risks through certified laboratories analysis.

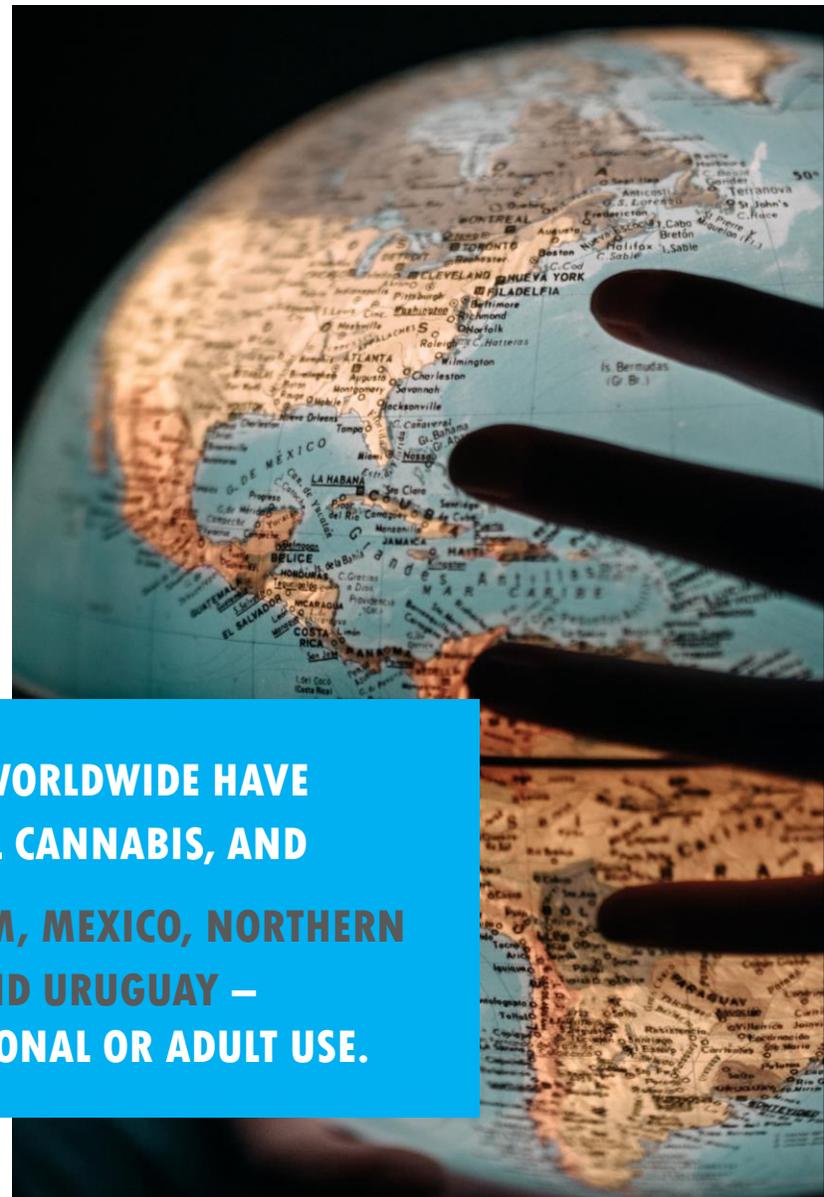
Regarding the relation between the commercialization of other illegal drugs and cannabis legalization, only 11% of 1735 surveyed people (200) think that illegal drug traffic will increase once cannabis is decriminalized.



In how many countries do you believe that cannabis is legal in some form?



Do you believe that the legalization of cannabis would increase the illicit drug trade in Panama?

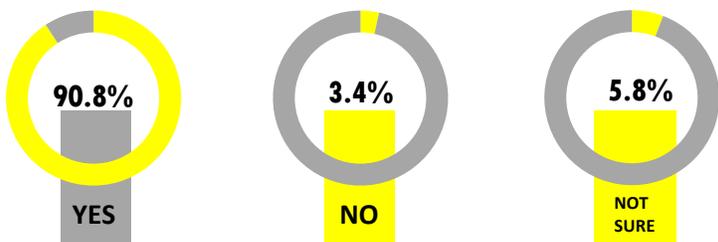


MORE THAN 50 COUNTRIES WORLDWIDE HAVE LEGALIZED SOME FORM OF MEDICINAL CANNABIS, AND SEVEN – CANADA, GEORGIA, GUAM, MEXICO, NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS, SOUTH AFRICA AND URUGUAY – HAVE LEGALIZED CANNABIS FOR PERSONAL OR ADULT USE.

THE FUTURE OF CANNABIS IN PANAMA

In Panama, cultivation and processing of any form of cannabis is criminalized, but the Law 14 of May 19th of 2016 - Controlled Substances Law - allows the registry of cannabidiol (CBD) for medical purposes.

At this moment, a bill is being evaluated to allow regulated medical grade cannabis cultivation under strict international control standards.



Hypothetically, if you suffered from an illness that could potentially be treated with cannabis would you consider using cannabis-based treatment?

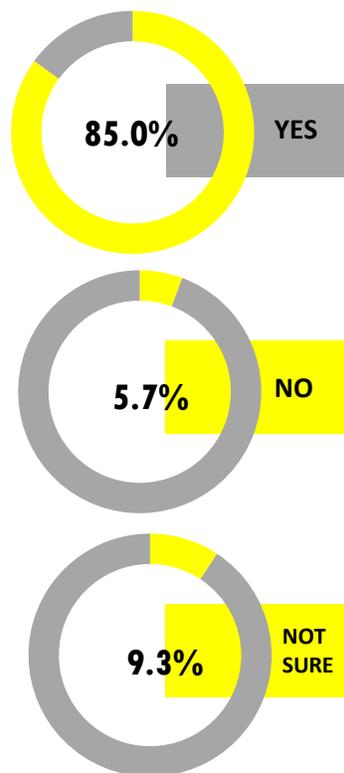
There is general acceptance of medical grade cannabis in the survey population. Only 3.4% of the 1731 people who replied, think that they would not use this substance as an alternative to traditional medical treatments.

32.0% of the 1732 surveyed people don't think that the use of cannabis derivatives will increase after legalization.

In the state of Colorado, United States, a decrease in the use of pain killers was observed, specifically in opioid use, once medical cannabis was legalized.

“90.8% OF THE PARTICIPANTS INDICATED THEY WOULD USE CANNABIS AS A MEDICAL TREATMENT, IN THE HYPOTHETICAL CASE THEY WERE SUFFERING FROM SOME OF THE CONDITIONS TREATED WITH THIS SUBSTANCE.”

The 1737 surveyed people were asked about their opinion on medical grade cannabis legalization in Panama. Results indicate that there is acceptance by the public to include Panama as a country that has legalized cannabis as a medical treatment.



Would you approve of the legalization of medical cannabis in a manner that is controlled and regulated under medical standards?

“85.0% OF PARTICIPANTS AGREE WITH THE LEGALIZATION OF MEDICAL CANNABIS IN PANAMA.”

DISCUSSION

The demand for cannabis derivatives by patients has increased in the last years due to the anecdotal evidence demonstrating its efficiency for certain conditions.

The objective of the survey was to evaluate the general opinions in an emergent country on the subject of medical cannabis. The prediction of the results were estimated in anticipation and support of the bill for the legalization of this substance.

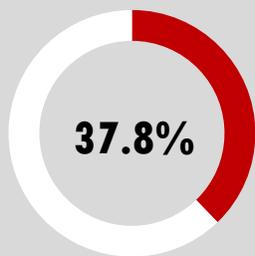
The lack of opportunities to perform clinical trials and lack of knowledge by health professionals as well as the general public has underestimated the benefits of cannabis as a medical treatment.

The agricultural and manufacturing potential of Panama is very promising. The legalization of cannabis cultivation and processing, in a regulated and controlled manner, not only represents a change in public health but also in the country's trade.

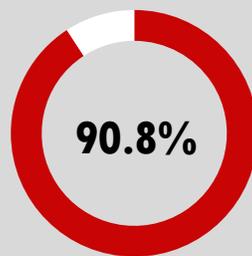
Panama has shown a positive attitude towards medical cannabis, having an acceptance rate of 85% among the surveyed, confirming the prediction that we had prior to starting the project.

The vision for Panama is to educate the public to eliminate the stigma and allow decisions to be made based on academic precedent. Panama has the potential to be part of the global medical cannabis industry and have the capacity to offer an alternative treatment for patients, in a responsible and controlled manner.

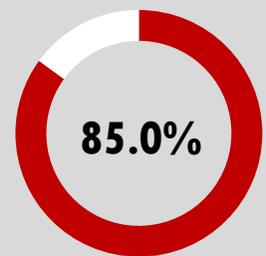
HIGHLIGHTS:



General population with **medium** level of knowledge about medical cannabis.



General population that **would use** cannabis as medical treatment.



General population that **would approve** a law for medical cannabis in Panama.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors appreciate the participation of the volunteers who were part of this initiative.

We are concerned about public health and we are convinced that education is the first step in forming a criteria and to encourage research among the population.

The lack of knowledge is what has stigmatized the cannabis plant over the years and has left behind the several benefits it represents for health and quality of life of patients around the world.

Let's be voice bearers and avoid misinformation!



Translated by Ricardo Caballero and Bryan Goldner

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