

## A Center Cultivating Cannabis Research and Policy takes Root at Jefferson

In keeping with its nearly 200-year history of innovation in science and medical education, Thomas Jefferson University is now the first major health sciences university in the United States to provide a comprehensive academic resource for education, research and practice in the medicinal application of cannabinoids. Founded in 2016, the goal of [The Lambert Center for the Study of Medicinal Cannabis and Hemp](#) is to advance cutting-edge research, offer innovative educational opportunities and identify areas for improvement in patient experience and access to cannabinoids. It is guided by a [Steering Committee](#), composed of national and international experts in the field of medicinal cannabis.

The Center is located within Jefferson's [Institute of Emerging Health Professions \(IEHP\)](#), which is an education and training "think tank" that seeks to identify and anticipate healthcare and health-related training needs as the Country's healthcare policies evolve over the next 3-7 years. With so many unanswered questions and incomplete answers about the effective use of cannabinoids, it is clearly an emerging healthcare policy and practice arena. The Center is named for Barry and Joy Lambert. Mr. Lambert, 70, is renowned in the Australian banking industry for founding Count Financial, Australia's largest network of accounting-based advisory firms. At 6-months old, Barry and Joy's granddaughter, Katelyn, was diagnosed with Dravet's syndrome, a form of severe epilepsy, which is a rare genetic abnormality that affects the brain's electric signaling system and causes severe and repetitive seizures. Cannabis derived from hemp gave Katelyn substantial relief from her seizures. The Lamberts' gift to

Jefferson reflects a belief that increased study into medicinal cannabis will offer greater hope for others suffering from a range of medical conditions.

The Lambert Center's research efforts aim to evaluate and elevate the evidence base for cannabinoid therapy in multiple medical conditions. The Center is currently developing a study to examine the use of medicinal cannabis by patients with sickle cell anemia, as Pennsylvania is [one of three states](#) that allows cannabinoid therapy for this chronic condition. Other projects include a white paper that documents current knowledge of cannabis and cannabinoid use for specific medical conditions and a voluntary national registry of patients who are using medical cannabis. The purpose of the latter is to inform the medical community and dispensaries about patients' experiences with the therapy, so that quality, procedures, and outcomes can be improved.

In July 2017, the Lambert Center collaborated with Temple University and Greenhouse Ventures to host the first session of the *Medical Cannabis Education Tour* at Jefferson University. In late September, the Center received approval from the Pennsylvania Department of Health to launch its four-hour continuing education online course for physicians, pharmacists, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants regarding the scientific basis, legal requirements, and potential uses of medicinal cannabis. Many states, including Pennsylvania, require healthcare professionals to obtain such education before they can recommend medicinal cannabis therapies or address patient needs in a registered dispensing facility. The

expert-developed, unbiased information about the medicinal uses of marijuana, hemp extract, and other cannabinoid-focused therapies features valid, balanced, and objective content that reflects the scientific standards of academic medicine. Seven elective modules on indications for cannabinoid therapy for specific conditions are available to help professionals feel even more confident regarding the subject. The Lambert Center, with the guidance of its Steering Committee, will soon be developing curricula for the first-ever Masters Degrees in Cannabinoid Medicine and Cannabinoid Chemistry.

The Lambert Center also houses the [Entrepreneurship and Social Impact Initiative](#), which focuses on the development of inclusive and socially responsible business approaches within the emerging medical cannabis industry. Working with the [Brookings Institute](#) and other leading think tanks, Center stakeholders are analyzing the impact that the industry could have on economic development and on the effects of exclusion (in many states, including Pennsylvania) of certain populations, such as individuals who were convicted of marijuana-related offenses that today would be considered minor or even non-criminal, from the industry. With the generous support of the [Snider Foundation](#), the Lambert Center will launch a workforce development program this fall in Philadelphia, with the hope that the model will be successful and "transportable" to other cities.

In addition to the Lambert Center, the Institute for Emerging Professions also houses the National Academic Center for Telehealth and The Steven H. Korman

# Population Health *Matters*



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Center for Community Engagement,  
which trains community health workers  
and other non-hospital-based caregivers.

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