

"The way Oregon crafted House Bill 3460," Thysell says of 2013's medical marijuana dispensary bill, "created a disaster waiting to happen in terms of lab testing because what they said was, everything has to be tested. So that's immediately going to create this huge laboratory industry in Oregon — it's big business."

"There's no third parties watching these labs," he continues. "It's up to them to do their own quality control."

Thysell uses Cascadia Labs in Bend and Oregon Analytical and OG Analytical in Eugene. Landis also uses Oregon Analytical and OG Analytical.

"OG Analytical is on the frontlines of some of the laws changing and setting the standards," Landis says, noting that lab owner Bethany Sherman "is working very hard to make sure there is some laboratory standards set. She's not into cutting corners whatsoever."

QUALITY CONTROL

Bethany Sherman is the founder of OG Analytical, the lab that Voelker directs. Sherman says she never anticipated getting involved with the cannabis industry until her mother was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, right around the same time HB 3460 was signed into law.

"So I launched a pretty deep personal research investigation on the efficacy of cannabis and how it interacts with the body and the potential risk for pesticides," Sherman says. "There are certain pesticides that if you ingest when you have MS, that can exacerbate the disease."

She continues, "I started looking around for what types of quality-control procedures are in place to ensure that my mom would be safe if she were to be consuming cannabis."

At the time, circa late 2013, Sherman only found two cannabis analysis labs operating in Oregon, neither of which were testing for pesticides. "It was an obvious gap that needed to be filled," she says.

And thus Sherman drafted a team for her lab, including Voelker, and started operating in the spring of 2014. OG Analytical has taken it upon itself to test for compounds



WILL THYSELL, OWNER OF NEXT LEVEL WELLNESS AND WHITE LABEL EXTRACTS, HAS BEEN MAKING BUTANE HASH OIL FOR FIVE YEARS

PHOTO BY TODD COOPER

found in pesticides that are not mandated by the state.

"Unfortunately, every state is reliant upon itself," Voelker says. "Normally these things are all handled at the federal level. Consumer protection is a federal responsibility."

He also concedes that "these state agencies are tasked with a lot of other things and they have limited budgets too. This is a real challenge."

It is uncertain at this point how the state will address this public health concern, though the Oregon Liquor Control Commission, tasked with regulating recreational marijuana, has recently created a Marijuana Rules Advisory Committee and four technical committees that

will address issues like compliance and enforcement, lab accreditation and different marijuana products like extracts, topicals and edibles.

Sherman sits on the Lab and Traceability committee, which she says held its first meeting in June. The last meeting is scheduled for October, with the expectation that a set of rules for regulating labs and testing will be developed by then.

Sherman says her committee is focused on accreditation — "the state licensing and accreditation for labs, because that's something that doesn't exist at all for today." She adds, "Within that, we need to develop a good solid target list for which pesticides we're going to be looking for."

Voelker's study also has a list of recommendations for the state.

BHO ON THE RISE

In the meantime, use of BHO and concentrates is on the rise. Flip through any marijuana publication or visit dispensary websites and find a seemingly endless stream of advertisements peddling glistening gold concentrates heralded as "pure," "clean" and "safe" medicine.

Marianne Slason, a BHO consumer and owner of the Santa Clara Smoke Shop, says the use of BHO is "very prevalent here." She adds, "My vaporizer pens for concentrate are one of my number-one sellers."

Landis and Thysell agree.

"We're seeing the usages of [BHO] increasing, especially with the use of these vaporize pens and the cartridges and everything," Landis says. "I think the demographic is growing every day on who's using it."

Have more questions? So do we. OG Analytical will start hosting a free monthly educational series — Cannabis Science Pub — 6 to 9 pm Tuesday, June 30, at Cozmic. The focus of the first pub is "Legalization 101," with guest speakers from the Emerald Trade Alliance, the Eugene Police Department and the Constant Gardener. OG Analytical will also present on cannabinoids, terpenes and, of course, cannabis testing. ■

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