

U.S. OKs marijuana-based drug for seizures

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. health regulators on Monday approved the first prescription drug made from marijuana, a milestone that could spur more research into a drug that remains illegal under federal law, despite growing legalization for recreational and medical use.

The Food and Drug Administration approved the medication, called Epidiolex, to treat two rare forms of epilepsy in patients 2 years and older. But it's not quite medical marijuana.

The strawberry-flavored syrup is a purified form of a chemical ingredient found in the cannabis plant — but not the one that gets users high. It's not yet clear why the ingredient, called cannabidiol, or CBD, reduces seizures in some people with epilepsy.

British drugmaker GW Pharmaceuticals studied the drug in more than 500 children and adults with hard-to-treat seizures, overcoming

numerous legal hurdles that have long stymied research into cannabis.

FDA officials said the drug reduced seizures when combined with older epilepsy drugs. FDA chief Scott Gottlieb said his agency had supported research on cannabis-derived products “for many years.”

“This approval serves as a reminder that sound development programs that properly evaluate active ingredients contained in marijuana can lead to important medical therapies,” Gottlieb told reporters.

The FDA has previously approved synthetic versions of another cannabis ingredient for medical use, including severe weight loss in patients with HIV.

Epidiolex is essentially a pharmaceutical-grade version of CBD oil, which some parents already use to treat children with epilepsy. CBD is one of more than 100 chemicals found in marijuana. It doesn't con-



AP Photo/Kathy Young, File

This 2017 file photo shows GW Pharmaceuticals' Epidiolex, a medicine made from the marijuana plant but without THC. U.S. health regulators on Monday approved the first prescription drug made from marijuana, a milestone that could spur more research into a drug that remains illegal under federal law, despite growing legalization for recreational and medical use.

tain THC, the ingredient that gives marijuana its mind-altering effect.

Physicians say it's

a product that will be much cleaner and one that I know what it is,” said Dr. Ellaine Wirrell, director of the Mayo Clinic's program for childhood epilepsy. “In the artisanal products there's often a huge variation in doses from bottle to bottle depending on where you get it.”

Side effects with the drug include diarrhea, vomiting, fatigue and sleep problems.

Several years ago, Allison Hendershot considered relocating her family to Colorado, one of the first states to legalize marijuana and home to a large network of CBD producers and providers. Her 13-year-old daughter, Molly, has suffered from severe seizures since she was 4 months old. But then Hendershot learned about a trial of Epidiolex at New York University.

“I preferred this to some of those other options because it's is a commercial product that has gone through rigorous testing,” said Hendershot, who lives

in Rochester, New York.

Since receiving Epidiolex, Hendershot says her daughter has been able to concentrate more and has had fewer “drop” seizures — in which her entire body goes limp and collapses.

CBD oil is currently sold online and in specialty shops across the U.S., though its legal status remains murky. Most producers say their oil is made from hemp, a plant in the cannabis family that contains little THC and can be legally farmed in a number of states for clothing, food and other uses.

The immediate impact of Monday's approval on these products is unclear.

FDA's Gottlieb warned about the use of CBD products with “unproven medical claims.”

“The promotion and use of these unapproved products may keep some patients from accessing appropriate, recognized therapies to treat serious and even fatal diseases,” Gottlieb said.

FCC: “Out here, we’re still in dial-up mode”

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communities could gain access to broadband internet services, the conversation did touch on the FCC's recent repeal of net neutrality.

Net neutrality is a rule that requires internet service providers to treat all internet traffic equally, regardless of how much they pay or where they are located.

With the repeal having gone into effect on June 11, Pai shot back at some of his critics.

In both an interview before the meeting and in his discussions during the meeting, Pai said the sky hadn't fallen since net neutrality ended 12 days prior and the “fear mongering” coming from “grandstanding politicians” opposed to the move was overblown.

Walden backed him up, saying the communication technology had benefited from the FCC's “light touch” approach in the past, and the old policy was hampering expansion into rural areas.

Weston Mayor Jennifer Spurgeon said improving her city's internet access has been a personal “pet project.”

Spurgeon said the idea of net neutrality isn't relevant in her city, because her town's internet access is already inconsistent and slow.

“Out here, we're still in dial-up mode,” she said.

A real estate appraiser who works from home, Spurgeon said she recently tried to upload real estate photos onto her computer. After they failed to load a few times, she went to lunch in the time it took them to publish.

Weston wasn't the only



Photo by Antonio Sierra

Weston Mayor Jennifer Spurgeon speaks to FCC Chairman Ajit Pai and Rep. Greg Walden at a meeting on rural broadband in Weston on Saturday.

town that local officials reported having problems.

John Day City Manager Nick Green said his city has already received \$2 million from the Oregon Legislature to build fiber lines to rural John Day, but the town needs another \$3 million to get the project done.

With John Day being a \$40,000 market at best, Green said a private company voluntarily extending broadband to John Day was unlikely.

“If it's not publicly owned or publicly available, we're screwed,” he said.

While the audience mostly nodded in agreement with one another, not everyone in Eastern Oregon was a fan of Walden and Pai's policies.

Walden and Pai spent the first two legs of the trip vis-

iting Mirasol Family Health Clinic in Hermiston to talk about tele-health and the Umatilla County Dispatch in Pendleton to talk about gaps in 911 coverage. They were greeted at the latter by five activists dissatisfied with the pair.

Standing in the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office parking lot, the protesters focused most of their ire on Walden.

They carried a sign that stated “WALDEN SOLD YOU OUT” and Colleen Blackwood fashioned “Vote McLeod-Skinner” apparel out of tape and a jean jacket, referring to the Hood River Republican's Democratic opponent this November.

Among the hashtags on the protest sign was “#Net-Neutrality.” Protester Sue Petersen wasn't keen on the

repeal.

“For rich people, they love it,” she said.

When Walden's car rolled into the parking lot, their signs and voices elicited a wave and a smile from the ten-term congressman before he was quickly escorted into the building.

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Contact Antonio Sierra at asierra@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0836.

POLICE: A party pack voucher is given to host

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space for parties. Hill Meat, Franz Bakery and other local sponsors are providing free hot dogs and buns.

Studebaker said people who register to hold a National Night Out event will receive a “party pack voucher,” which they can return a couple of days before the party to get the food and free passes to the city's aquatic center for people attending the party.

“Those pool passes can't be sold, they can't be raffled to anybody,” she added.

The party packs could include more fun items. Studebaker said she is reaching out to other community partners to see how else she can beef them up.

Pendleton officers and firefighters also will be out that night at block parties and community sites.

National Night Out takes place on the first Tuesday in August — Aug. 7 this year. First Tuesdays of every month are regular meeting dates of the Pendleton City Council. Studebaker said she spoke with Mayor John Turner, and the council will postpone their regularly scheduled meeting by a week. City councilors, then, can attend the parties, and Studebaker said some councilors expressed the desire to

participate and even host a gathering.

The city library is looking at a coloring contest for the event, and might hold a campfire stories session in one neighborhood.

“We're trying to get as many community partners in as possible with this,” she said.

You can visit the Pendleton Police Department's website to register for a National Night Out event: <http://ppd.pendleton.or.us/>. The deadline is July 24. Studebaker said that gives enough time to figure out how many hot dogs, buns and what-all-else to have ready. Folks can email the forms, mail them or bring them to the police department.

This is a big change from the previous department's previous National Night Outs, Studebaker said, and so this year might be a bit slow going. But this is a way to help neighbors talk and get to know one another, she said, and comes closer to embracing the idea and spirit of National Night Out.

If you have questions about hosting a party or to see if a party has been registered in your neighborhood, email NightOut@ci.pendleton.or.us or call Studebaker at 541-276-4411 extension 1109.

CURRENCY: Under proposed changes, treated similarly to contributions of stock

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The Secretary of State's Office says the state rule will mirror an advisory opinion released by the Federal Election Commission in 2014 that says political committees can accept campaign contributions of cryptocurrency.

Under the proposed changes to state rules, cryptocurrency would be treated similarly to contributions of stock.

The contribution amount would correspond to the market value of the cryptocurrency the day it was received.

If a campaign committee liquidates cryptocurrency, and its value has increased after reporting the contribution, the difference would be reported as investment income.

If the value has decreased

since the original contribution date, the committee has to report that as a “miscellaneous other disbursement” just as it would report a loss in investment value.

Ann Ravel, a former FEC commissioner who served from 2013 to 2017, says she has doubts about the traceability of cryptocurrency.

“I don't think it meets the transparency laws,” Ravel said.

Every Bitcoin transaction is public — via a log of transactions known as the “block chain” — but transactors are not.

A Bitcoin user's identity, IP address or location can't be reliably traced, according to the 2014 advisory opinion from the FEC.

The FEC decided to treat Bitcoin like cash, advising that federal campaigns could accept contributions of up to \$100 worth of the virtual

currency.

In Oregon, though, there would not be any limits on the amount of cryptocurrency a donor could give to a campaign, said Deb Royal, Richardson's chief of staff.

While Oregon's Constitution doesn't allow value limits on campaign contributions, the state does require public disclosure of details about a campaign donor when aggregate donations from one person meet or exceed \$100 in the same calendar year.

Members of the public can comment on the proposed rule at a public hearing at 3:30 p.m. July 23 at the state elections division, 255 Capitol Street NE, Suite 501, in Salem.

Oregonians can also submit their comments via email to elections.sos@oregon.gov until 4 p.m. on August 7.



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