

Cancer docs feel unprepared, but recommend marijuana anyway

BY CARLA K. JOHNSON
AP MEDICAL WRITER

SEATTLE (AP) — Nearly half of U.S. cancer doctors who responded to a survey say they've recently recommended medical marijuana to patients, although most say they don't know enough about medicinal use.

The results reflect how marijuana policy in some states has outpaced research, the study authors said. All 29 states with medical marijuana programs allow doctors to recommend it to cancer patients. But no rigorous studies in cancer patients exist. That leaves doctors to make assumptions from other research on similar prescription drugs, or in other types of patients.

"The big takeaway is we need more research, plain and simple," said Dr. Ilana Braun of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, who led the study published Thursday in the Journal of Clinical Oncology.

Patients want to know what their doctors think about using marijuana. In the new study, cancer doctors said their conversations about marijuana were almost always started by patients and their families, not by the doctors themselves.

Overall, nearly eight in 10 cancer doctors reported having discussed marijuana with patients or their families, with 46 percent recommending it for pain and other cancer-related problems to at least one patient in the past year.

Among those who said they recommended marijuana, 56 percent said they did not have sufficient knowledge to do so.

"They're not as close-minded as you might think, and they also feel they have a lot to learn," Braun said.

The survey was conducted in a random sample of cancer doctors; researchers got completed surveys from 237 doctors, or 63 percent.

Marijuana is considered an illegal drug by federal officials and federal restrictions have limited research. Last year, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine concluded the lack of scientific information about marijuana poses a risk to public health.

There's evidence marijuana can treat chronic pain in adults and medications similar to marijuana can ease nausea from chemotherapy.

In the study, 67 percent of cancer doctors said they view marijuana as a useful addition to standard pain therapies, with 75 percent saying it posed less risk of overdose than opioids. About half view marijuana as equal to, or more effective than, standard treatments for cancer-related nausea.

Marijuana isn't harmless. The National Academies report said pot smoking may be linked to higher chances of traffic accidents, chronic bronchitis from long-term use and schizophrenia and other causes of psychosis, especially in the most frequent users.

Dr. Steven Pergam of Seattle Cancer Care Alliance answers questions about marijuana's safety from his colleagues at the treatment center.

His responses depend on the patient. A dying patient with cancer that's spread? "Whatever they want to do to make themselves comfortable," said Pergam, who wasn't involved in the new research. A patient with leukemia, however, should be warned of a theoretical possibility of a fungal infection tied to cannabis use.

"If we're not comfortable having these discussions, patients will get information from other sources, and it's not going to be as reliable," he said.



COURTESY PHOTO | JACOB BYK/WYOMING TRIBUNE EAGLE VIA WYOMING NEWS EXCHANGE

Franklin Macon, left, speaks to a crowd of students during a presentation at Afflerbach Elementary School in Cheyenne Thursday, May 10, 2018. Macon, a 94-year-old Tuskegee Airman, is the subject of a book recently written by three current and former Cheyenne residents.

Cheyenne students learn from Tuskegee airman

BY KRISTINE GALLOWAY
WYOMING TRIBUNE EAGLE
VIA WYOMING NEWS EXCHANGE

CHEYENNE — Franklin Macon, an original Tuskegee Airman, spoke Thursday to students who don't enjoy school.

The 94-year-old asked students from Cheyenne's Afflerbach and Cole elementary schools to raise their hands if they don't like school.

Then he said, "The rest of you — I'm not talking to you all. I didn't like school, either, so now we're on the same page."

He told the students funny stories about all the hell he raised as a child — both in school and out — before he learned to like school and eventually studied aeronautics at the Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama.

One of Macon's stories involved a teacher he didn't like and his devious plan to "fix her."

He can't remember if she was his second- or third-grade teacher, but he does remember he always wanted to sit in the back of the room, and she made him sit right in front of her desk.

Macon explained that while the students read, this teacher liked to eat chocolate-covered cherries. He brought a razor blade to school and used it to cut one open and remove the cherry.

"Of course, I didn't waste it, you know. I ate it. And I put some pepper — cayenne pepper — and a bunch of stuff inside there, and then I sealed it back up," he said.

But as soon as she bit into the decoy cherry, she knew he had been the one to tamper with it, probably because he

didn't try to sit in the back of the class that day, Macon told the students.

"She came right over her desk and right onto me, and she grabbed me," he said.

He said he thinks his behavior may have been a cover for his dyslexia, which made reading difficult. He repeated a grade because of it.

Macon told the students that letters and numbers seemed to move around the page and switch around.

"I had to take my finger and keep it on each word or number, and that way they wouldn't change on me," he said.

"I think that because I had these problems was one of the reasons I was such a little devil in school - trying to cover up. Everybody else was getting A's, but I couldn't do it."

Macon was born Aug. 4, 1923, to 14-year-old Eva Banks. Shortly after his birth, his two great-aunts, Maude Macon and Ella Bell, took over his care. He was raised in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

When Macon was in the second grade, Maude Macon married Frank Loper, a man who had been born into slavery on Confederacy President Jefferson Davis' plantation. Loper became the father figure in Macon's life.

Macon was about 4 when he first went up in a plane and developed a love of flying that never left him.

He lived next door to the Warden family. A couple of the Warden sisters were dating pilots who worked at the Alexander Aircraft Company in Colorado Springs.

The girls would babysit Macon and take him when they went to fly with their boyfriends.

Macon learned to fly through the

Civil Air Patrol in high school. He also found his love for science during high school and took every science class he could. He graduated in 1942 when he was 17.

Macon had to leave Tuskegee when he first attended because he was too young. Airmen had to be at least 19 or 20, and he was only 18. But he later returned to complete his training.

About two weeks before he would have graduated as a pilot, he went up dog-fighting with a bad cold and busted his eardrums.

He was sent home for medical reasons and never saw combat, but they gave him his paperwork to finish his certification, and he had the option to return and complete the program with the next class.

Macon said he didn't want to be part of the segregated service or live in the South anymore, so he left the Army Air Corps. He later enlisted in the Army Air Corps Reserves and received his pilot certification.

Macon tells his story in a book he's written with help from Elizabeth Harper and her partners, Deanna Dyekman and Stephanie Prescott.

That book, "I Wanted to be a Pilot: The Making of a Tuskegee Airman," will become available electronically Aug. 7 and in stores Nov. 20.

Macon said he hopes people who hear his story will realize they can work to achieve their dreams, even if they have learning difficulties, come from single-parent homes or struggle with any other barriers.

He told the students, "Those of you who held your hand up and didn't like school, I think you should understand that you need to have that education. Don't give up."

SENIOR HAPPENINGS |

- The University of Wyoming Department of Theatre and Dance will present "Six Songs from Ellis" Tuesday from 1-2 p.m. at The Hub on Smith. Join Patricia Kessler, humanities scholar with Laramie County Community College, for a discussion about Wyoming's history as it relates to immigration as well as the larger topic of immigration through Ellis Island.

Kessler is traveling with the UW Theatre and Dance tour.


- The Hub on Smith has organized a trip to see "I Do! I Do!" Sunday at 2 p.m. at the Mars Theater. "I Do! I Do!" is a musical written by Tom Jones with music by Harvey Schmidt.

The story spans 50 years and focuses on the ups and downs experienced by Agnes and Michael throughout their marriage. The fun bus will run for

your convenience. Sign-up and The Hub keep you posted.

- Enjoy a geological hike at the foot of the Bighorns near Little Goose Creek Road May 31. Meet at The Hub at 9:15 a.m. to depart at 9:30 a.m. The group will return from the hike site around 3:30 p.m. Bring a lunch. Sign up at the front desk of The Hub by May 25.

The hike is moderately strenuous.



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