

Mr. Phillip Clarke, Master of Ceremonies

Dr. Janet Campbell-Shelly, Associate Professor & Dean, College of Health Sciences  
UTECH

Dr. Ellen Campbell-Grizzle, Associate Professor, College of Health Sciences,  
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Dr. Cliff Riley, Executive Director, Science Research Council,

Professor Colin Gyles, Deputy President of University of Technology, Jamaica,

The Honourable, Audley Shaw, Minister of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and  
Fisheries

Other Distinguished guests and attendees

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning to you all.

First, I would like to thank the University of Technology for inviting the Cannabis Licensing Authority to participate in this activity.

Jamaica's Medicinal Cannabis Industry is on the rise!!! Wouldn't you agree?

There is much happening, locally, regionally and internationally.

With the recent approval of a drug containing Cannabidiol (CBD), by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), there are great expectations and much anticipated transformation of the global medicinal cannabis space.

In Jamaica, there is a lot of scope for growth in many areas such as research, export, innovation, preparation of new products; you name it, we have the potential, technical competence and the will to do it.

When I perused the agenda for this Symposium, I was very pleased to see the diversity, everyone coming together to make this Symposium a success, which epitomizes the importance of collaboration or partnerships in order to achieve a common goal or objective.

Therefore, the role of the Cannabis Licensing Authority (CLA) in this partnership is to develop regulations, in conjunction with the Minister of Justice, for the issuance and regulation of licences, permits and authorizations for the handling of hemp and ganja for medical, therapeutic and scientific purposes.

In executing the mandate, there is a delicate balance that must be maintained as cannabis sativa, known to us as ganja, is still an illegal commodity, if handled outside of a regulated framework.

Further, although reported activities across the world suggest that there is a steady movement towards scientific exploration and testing and the consequent acceptance of the many health benefits that are believed to be derived from using this “miracle plant”, there still remains ambivalence in our society, which adds to the existing challenges that confront the Authority.

Notwithstanding, three primary objectives of the Authority are:

1. To create an enabling environment for all who wish to become involved in the medicinal cannabis industry whilst protecting and preserving local interests.
2. Build global confidence in Jamaica's ability to enforce its Regulations and Honour its international obligations through active enforcement, monitoring and surveillance activities to ensure compliance and prevent diversion, and the movement of ganja whilst eradicating diversion, and,
3. To provide a sustainable regulatory framework that is transparent, equitable, standardized and consistent with global best practices whilst remaining in compliance with our international obligations.

It is therefore no small feat to maintain the balance between the requirements of the international community, the cultural and traditional value of the plant, and the facilitation of opportunities for economic gain.

The reputation of the medicinal benefits of the plant is known and steeped in home remedies, that is, anecdotal. This therefore, underscores the need for continuous research which will transition home remedies into well documented bodies of work that should culminate into solutions to improve the health and wellbeing of all persons.

In order to achieve this, the Authority recognizes the importance of analysis, testing, the development of standards, benchmarking etc. as high priority activities that all complement research and that are very critical tools needed for transforming the local medicinal cannabis industry. This is very important for the safe use or consumption of products locally but becomes even more important for exportation of products into global markets.

Although mandated to focus on regulating the medicinal cannabis industry, the Authority is mindful of the important role that stakeholders, such as, Academia play in driving the successful and timely development of the industry. This is evidenced today by UTECH'S hosting of this activity.

As we continue to create opportunities for all Jamaicans, Academia must be recognized and included in all areas of the industry as an important contributor, and part of the value chain.

It is through research, often pioneered by Academia, and through the hosting of symposiums and the inclusion of working groups such as these, that Academia has helped to broaden the scope of understanding, learning, knowledge transfer, as well as innovation which this industry currently needs to become viable and sustainable.

Ladies and gentlemen, in closing, let us continue as Jamaicans to support forums like these as we chart a new and fulfilling course in contributing to Jamaica's economic growth and development through the advancement of Jamaica's medicinal ganja industry.

Congratulations, UTECH, keep up the good work!!!

Thank You.