

## Medical Writing Doesn't Have to Be Complicated.



### **Communication: Keeping It Plain and Simple**

In the digital magazine arena, I have continued writing for *Drug Topics*. As a pharmacist, I feel honored to contribute to one of the nation's oldest publications for pharmacists and to write for my fellow colleagues.

Perhaps, my favorite assignment for this outlet was the simplest: I wrote a slideshow on communicating with patients in [plain language](#). I enjoyed the task, but narrowing down my tips to eight key points proved quite the challenge! That said, I wanted to include a few helpful hints on plain language communication that didn't make it into my slideshow:

- 1) Use second-person pronouns such as "you" and "we." Psychologically, these words do something to us as readers: They create more personable content by making readers feel as if the writer speaking directly to us. Even though the majority of this newsletter is written at levels higher than the 5th

grade, notice how the use of the pronouns in the previous sentences made you feel.

2) Avoid using passive verbs (i.e., verbs that include various conjugations of “to be”).

3) Use action words as much as possible. This keeps your reader engaged. For more resources about plain language, please visit this [website](#).

On a side note, I have recently pinned a few blog posts for WebMD, and you can read my latest here.

## Key Takeaways from Medicinal Cannabis Research

### Ohio Legalizes Medicinal Cannabis, Faces Delays in Program Launch



Travel, research, and interesting kept me busy most of the summer, but I can't complain. My continued involvement in integrative medicine and pharmacognosy took me back to Cincinnati where I spent a month researching the history of medicinal cannabis.

The assignment coincided with Ohio's recent medical cannabis-related legalization and the state's medical cannabis program slated to go into effect in early 2019. The cannabis bill failed to pass when initially proposed in 2015 but managed to skate by on a later ballot.

The Buckeye State officially legalized marijuana for medicinal use in June 2018, but [ongoing woes](#) and licensing delays continue to stunt the program's original September 8, 2018 kickoff date.

By the way, Ohio is the 25<sup>th</sup> state to legalize cannabis, and 24 companies have [been approved](#) to grow the controversial plant for medical use within its borders.

## **Cannabis in Addiction Medicine: History Repeating Itself**

Whether cultivated for recreational or medicinal purposes, cannabis use remains a highly controversial and inflammatory topic. Perhaps the most surprising discovery in my latest research was that doctors were using cannabis to treat opioid addiction treatment as early as the late 19th century or perhaps even earlier. Allow me to briefly summarize the findings of an early case report published in the 1890 edition of the clinical journal *Lancet* here:

In the article, Calcutta-based physician Edward A. Birch recounts the testimonial of a man who, following the death of his wife due to an overdose, became addicted to the same substance to which his wife succumbed—the sedative chloral hydrate.

The physician first weaned the patient off chloral hydrate with a multi-compound tincture that contained *Cannabis indica*. He then prescribed the patient a pill of *Cannabis indica*. The patient reported no longer having the desire to use chloral hydrate.

In recent years, *JAMA* has published a few studies about the potential use of cannabis in addiction treatment. One study showed a nearly inverse relationship between cannabis use and opioid addiction. However, a 2015 study shows cannabis use [has doubled](#) among adults in recent years, which the authors write “could bring additional public health challenges related to addiction, drugged driving, and access to effective treatment.”

## **The World's Most Comprehensive Research Report on Medicinal Cannabis Remains Largely Obscure**

Did you know that cannabis has been used medicinally for millennia? Or that the most substantial body of research conducted on the plant is detailed in a seven-volume document published in 1894? This document, called the Indian Hemp Drugs Commission Report, consists of 3,281 pages and remains the most comprehensive body of research conducted on cannabis to date.

However, the report remains largely unknown and underutilized in the world of cannabis research. The document provides one example illustrating some of

the meticulous research projects conducted on herbs and other substances in India that were regulated and taxed by the British empire at the time.

Although I have not seen the entire document myself, I did manage to see the first two volumes of report courtesy of an interlibrary loan from Hampton University.

**My advice for medicinal cannabis researchers seeking this document:**

Consider reviewing a summary of the report before taking a deeper dive. The summary of the Indian Hemp Drugs Commission Report serves as a great starting point to help you outline optimize your time, but it's easier to track down than the complete, seven-volume compilation.

**So... what's next?**

My current projects include needs assessment work and summarizing some biomaterials research. I'll also be attending two conferences in October. I will share some pearls in my next newsletter, so stay tuned. In the meantime, free to visit my [website](#) for more about me, or contact me at [frieda@friedawiley.com](mailto:frieda@friedawiley.com).

Until next time....



**Frieda Wiley, PharmD**  
**Freelance Medical and Science**  
**Writer**

[frieda@friedawiley.com](mailto:frieda@friedawiley.com)

(832) 781-1662



Get In Touch

[Portfolio](#)

[Meet Frieda](#)

[Expertise](#)