

The question of whether a GP can prescribe medical cannabis in the UK often generates confusion among patients, caregivers, and even some healthcare professionals. The answer, while legally clear, involves several practical and regulatory nuances that distinguish what is legal from what is realistically accessible.

In this detailed post, we will unpack the key facts around medical cannabis prescribing in the UK, clarify common misunderstandings, and provide a transparent guide to navigating private and NHS pathways. We'll also examine remote options like video consultations and address the vital topic of transparency in pricing — a frequently overlooked issue in the private medical cannabis market.

Understanding Legality Versus Real-World Access

Since November 2018, medical cannabis became legal for prescription by specialist doctors in the UK. This historic change was welcomed, but it's important to separate legality from widespread availability.

- **Legal status:** Medical cannabis is legal to prescribe under certain conditions and regulations.
- **Real-world access:** Despite legality, very few patients receive medical cannabis prescriptions from NHS GPs or specialists.

Most NHS clinicians remain cautious. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and other bodies have highlighted limited high-quality evidence supporting the broad use of medical cannabis products. Consequently, many healthcare providers hesitate to initiate treatment, especially when other licensed treatments exist.



Why Can't My GP Simply Prescribe Medical Cannabis?

If you're hoping your GP will initiate a prescription, here's the critical point:

- **GPs cannot initiate medical cannabis prescriptions.** By law and professional guidelines, only doctors on the *GMC Specialist Register* in relevant disciplines may prescribe medical cannabis products for medicinal use.
- If a patient has an existing prescription started by a specialist, a GP may continue prescribing in some cases, but this is uncommon and at the clinician's discretion.

The General Medical Council (GMC) regulates who can prescribe such controlled substances. The prescribing doctor must be a specialist with expertise in the condition being treated, such as neurology, pain management, or palliative care—fields where evidence and guidelines currently suggest potential utility for cannabis medicines.

What is the GMC Specialist Register?

The GMC Specialist Register is an official list of doctors accredited as specialists in particular branches of medicine. To prescribe medical cannabis legally, a doctor must be registered there with a specialty relevant to the treatment indication.

This requirement aims to ensure patients receive prescriptions from experts proficient in managing complex conditions and familiar with the risks and benefits of [unlicensed cannabis products uk](#) cannabis-based medicines.

The NHS Funding Gap and the Private Market Reality

Despite the legality, medical cannabis remains widely inaccessible on the NHS, largely because:

- **Lack of routine NHS funding:** Most NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and Health Boards rarely approve funding for these prescriptions due to insufficient consistent clinical evidence or cost-effectiveness concerns.
- **Specialist availability:** Few NHS specialists initiate medical cannabis treatments since it's often seen as last-line or experimental therapy.

Consequently, an increasing number of patients turn to private clinics where specialist prescribers may assess and prescribe medical cannabis after detailed consultation. The private market, while providing access, introduces its own challenges:

- **Significant out-of-pocket expense:** Private consultations, prescriptions, and ongoing medication costs can quickly add up.
- **Variable transparency:** Some clinics fail to clearly state consultation fees or prescription costs upfront.
- **Regulatory requirements:** Private providers in England must register with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) if they offer remote prescribing services, including medical cannabis, to ensure safety and compliance.

Video Consultations and Remote Prescribing: The Modern Patient's Pathway

Many medical cannabis clinics now offer video consultations, allowing patients to access specialist prescribers remotely. This model fits well with the ongoing telemedicine shift, offering convenience and wider reach.

However, it is crucial that remote prescribing services comply with regulatory standards:

- **CQC Registration:** In England, any provider conducting video consultations and remote prescribing must declare this activity and register with the Care Quality Commission.
- **Clinical governance:** Ensuring proper patient assessment, follow-up, and monitoring is essential, especially with controlled substances like medical cannabis.

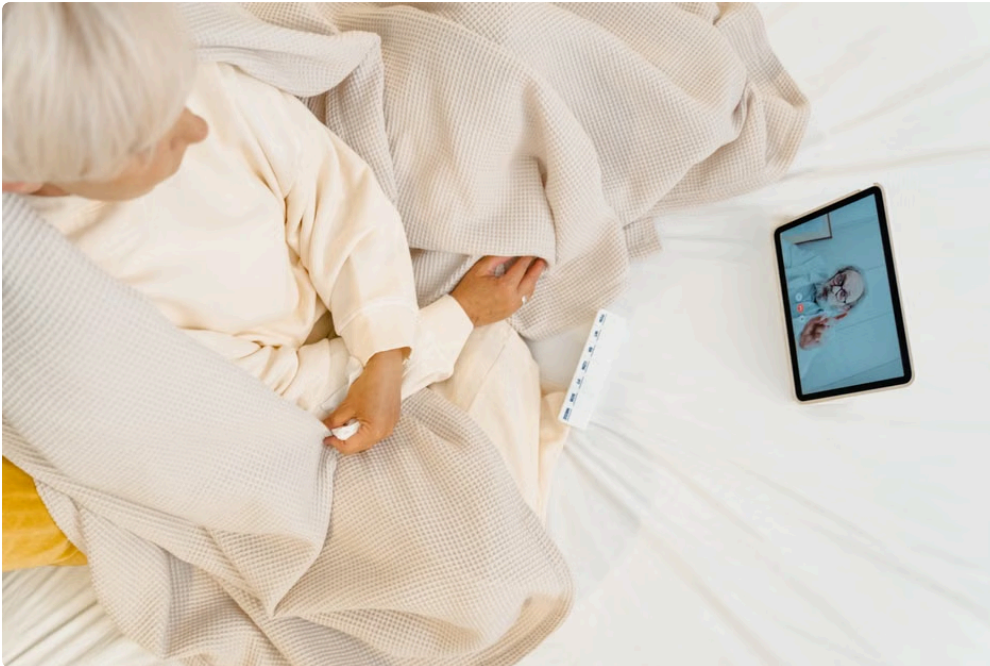
Patients should verify that any private clinic offering remote medical cannabis prescriptions is appropriately registered and regulated. This offers reassurance of oversight and standards adherence.

Common Mistake: No Clear Pricing for Consultations and Prescriptions

One frequently encountered frustration is the lack of pricing transparency in private medical cannabis clinics. Many websites and providers:

- Display vague or no pricing information for initial and follow-up consultations.
- Neglect to mention the expected cost of the prescription itself or ongoing medication costs.

This opacity leaves patients unable to evaluate affordability before committing, which can lead to unexpected financial burden.



What Should Patients Look For?

- **Clear consultation pricing:** Including initial assessment and any necessary follow-ups.
- **Prescription cost details:** Approximate price ranges for prescribed cannabis products and likely repeat prescriptions.
- **Additional fees:** Such as dispensing charges, shipping costs (if delivered), or lab tests if required.

Transparent pricing empowers patients to make informed decisions and avoid “hidden fees” that can make treatment prohibitively expensive.

Summary Checklist: Can Your GP Prescribe Medical Cannabis?

Question Answer Notes Can a GP start a medical cannabis prescription? No Only doctors on the GMC Specialist Register can initiate prescriptions. Can a GP continue a specialist’s cannabis prescription? Possibly, but rare and case-by-case It depends on GP willingness and clinical appropriateness. Who can legally prescribe medical cannabis? Specialist prescribers registered with GMC in relevant fields Common specialties include pain medicine, neurology, palliative care. Is medical cannabis commonly funded by the NHS? No Access via NHS is very limited; most patients use private clinics. Are online or video consultations legitimate for prescribing? Yes, if the provider is CQC registered in England Regulation ensures safety and standards compliance. Do private clinics always disclose consultation and prescription fees? No Patients should demand clear, upfront pricing.

Final Thoughts

Medical cannabis prescribing in the UK is legally restricted to specialist doctors, meaning your GP cannot initiate a prescription. The distinction between legality and real-world access is critical—while it is legal, NHS provision is exceptional and private routes dominate, often involving significant costs and requiring patients to navigate regulatory nuances themselves.

If you are considering medical cannabis, seek out clinics with qualified specialist prescribers on the GMC Specialist Register, ensure transparent fees for consultations and prescriptions, and verify CQC registration if remote prescribing is involved. This approach safeguards your treatment journey and clarifies expectations in a complex healthcare landscape.

Separating clear facts from fuzzy marketing claims helps patients make truly informed choices about medical cannabis in the UK.