Introduction

An online Reddit community, *FLmedicaltrees*, began in 2017 as a space for Florida medical cannabis patients to discuss laws, doctors, treatment, and products. The community has more than 54,000 members and several daily posts. Social networking theory and social exchange theory guided the study. The purpose was to look at patients' contamination experiences, knowledge, and feelings toward the medical cannabis system.

Research questions:

1. What are medical cannabis patients' experiences with contaminated products?

2. What are patients' knowledge levels of contaminates found in medical cannabis products? 3. What are patients' feelings towards the current state of the medical cannabis program in Florida? 4. What changes do patients want to see made to the Florida medical cannabis program?

Methods

A qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2012) of patients' posts about contaminated cannabis products using specific key words (*mold*, *contaminate, fiber*) to identify and collect contaminant-related posts during June 2022. The lead researcher screened posts (n = 300) for relevancy to the research questions and arrived at a final sample (n = 98). The three lead researchers developed a coding framework that included deductive codes such as *contamination concern*, *information seeking*, and *providing information*, and added inductive codes such as *not concerned with* contamination, similar experience, and personal *stories*. The lead researcher was the primary coder. Second and third researchers reviewed 20% of the coded posts to confirm accuracy.

Results

Theme 1:

Patients experience multiple forms of contamination throughout different products purchased from medical cannabis dispensaries.

Theme 2:

Patient knowledge levels of contaminates appear to be low, and this community is used to help find answers and second opinions.

Theme 3:

Some patients expressed feelings of anxiety and worry about health, safety, and quality control, while others had a lack of concern. Theme 4:

Patients want changes regarding vertical integration, company accountability, state oversight, and home grow law.

Medical cannabis contaminants concerns: A qualitative content analysis of Reddit posts

Spandau, G., Loizzo, J., Fechtel, H., Pearson, B., Bunch, C, J., Stedman, N. (2023) Medical cannabis patients' on Subreddit *FLmdicaltrees* share images and information about product contamination experiences. Many have safety concerns and call for more oversight in Florida's medical cannabis industry.



Figure 1: A post made by a patient who thought they saw mold on their cannabis.



Figure 3: A patient believed they found mold on their cannabis, and commenters discussed health risks and lack of company accountability





	is clumping and sticking to the capsule.
et sick from taking it?	anyone had this problem before? Will
Columbia Care	yr. ago
	Living my best life
	Ewwww, take it to the health department & show them this is
	the type of quality control their MMJ clinics has
	-1 Share
	l yr. ago
	Wonder when the suppositories are gonna get dropped? Keep
	asking
	1 Share
	I Love Mariguana
	Those have been out ahah
	2 Share
	https://www.reddit.com/r/FLMedicalTrees/comments/mc5hhi/something_wrong_with_my_capsules_oil_is_clumping/
	5/26/22, 6:01 PM Something wrong with my capsules? Oil is clumping and sticking to the capsule. Says on bottle the
	< Fully Medicated
	Imao they have them at my location but I don't think I'd ever
	try it
	1 Share
	Fully Medicated
	UPDATE: Took them in, employee brushed it off and said it's
	just because "thc is sticky". I guess they're fine to take, unless
	that guy was just being stupid.

-Igure 2: A post about a possible contaminant hoating in a patient's capsule, more quality control comments, and a story of a dispensary's unwillingness to help.

n against the		CC
n of flower after		1
as if there / set in place. Or	[deleted] · 2 yr. ago	
luct recalls to t a batch which	Another reason to get rid of VI.	
	23 Share	
the e.	FL · 2 yr. ago Skywalker OG	
	100%	
	8 Share	
octor and to the	Fully Medicated	
	Another reason to get rid of VI	
	The EXACT same words the manager at One Plant said to me when I returned it, lol	
their products er exchange it or much and	1 Share	
nem a picture if		
<mark>m I was not</mark> stuck with almost	COMING SOON: "MAC 1 SHATTER" Try to find any mold now! /s	
	Seriously though, this is the 3rd post I've seen of this. It's	
rot_on_mac_1/	harmful & not safe medicine.	
and bud rot on MAC 1 : FLMedicalTrees	Yet seems they'll continue to sell a moldy product in a strictly medical program ? Not limited to this single distributor	
	I'm thankful these cash grab company's are shaming Florida's	
	program with examples similar to this. It gives me hope that there will be more of a incentive to cut them out entirely & let us	
	all grow our own	
	23 Share	
1.4 gram MAC		



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• The state should re-evaluate current regulations and practices to increase oversight of

companies operating as medical dispensaries. Agricultural best management practices should be put in place at the beginning of the supply

chain to reduce contamination.

 Implementation of educational workshops and materials about medical cannabis, possible contaminants, and how to identify them for dispensaries and patients.