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Medicinal Use of Cannabis:

I support the prescription of CBMPs and I share some constituents' disappointment that many patients continue to suffer because they cannot access the treatment they need.

In November 2018, the law was changed to allow doctors on the specialist register of the General Medical Council to prescribe CBMPs. National clinical guidelines recommend several CBMPs for use on the NHS for the treatment of two rare forms of epilepsy; relief of spasticity associated with multiple sclerosis; and for side effects from chemotherapy.

Despite that change in the law nearly five years ago, many patients are still unable to obtain a prescription on the NHS. The trials and clinical research that would support the wider industry have moved, in my view, too slowly.

Meanwhile, many families are paying thousands of pounds a month to private healthcare providers for treatment. I am concerned that this is creating an unjust two-tier system where those who can pay get access to vital medication and those who cannot pay go without.

Concerns have also been raised about the regulatory framework affecting UK-based wholesalers of medicinal cannabis. According to the UN's International Narcotics Control Board, the UK is the main exporter of cannabis-based medicines, yet the NHS is reliant on importing products. I urge ministers to look closely at this issue and see what more can be done on domestic supply to improve access.

The Government said it is working with the health system, industry, and researchers to improve the evidence base for other unlicensed CBMPs, and to implement the recommendations of an NHS review on barriers to accessing unlicensed CBMPs. This includes the design of clinical trials to enable evidence based prescribing decisions, alongside the establishment of a national patient registry.

But, in my view, progress has been too slow. I urge ministers to speed up and improve the availability of CBMPs on the NHS and guarantee that patients across the country can access those products where appropriate.

I assure constituents that I will follow this matter closely and bear in mind the points raised.

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