FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Gianna DeMedio
Public Affairs Specialist
Gianna.DeMedio@Jefferson.edu
Office: 215-955-5507
Cell: 215-873-1760

Thomas Jefferson University Announces Center for Medical Cannabis Education & Research
First Health Sciences University in the Nation to Provide Groundbreaking Resources and Support for the Study of Medical Marijuana

PHILADELPHIA (May 31st, 2016)- The Institute of Emerging Health Professions at Thomas Jefferson University announces the creation of the Center for Medical Cannabis Education & Research (CMCER), which will provide expert-developed, unbiased information and guidance to clinicians and patients about the medical uses of marijuana and cannabinoid focused-therapies. This pioneering endeavor will serve as an educational, academic, and research resource for both healthcare professionals and the public on the subject of medical marijuana.

“Jefferson is a leader in innovation, and the creation of the CMCER signals the institution’s dedication to embrace the ever-evolving nature of healthcare,” said Stephen K. Klasko, M.D., MBA, President and CEO of Thomas Jefferson University and Jefferson Health. “Understanding and researching new cutting-edge methods for the treatment of disease is a fundamental goal, and Jefferson is proud to be among the first of its kind to offer resources and support for the revolutionary expansion for medical marijuana.”

The mission of the CMCER, which will be led by Charles V. Pollack Jr., MA, M.D., FACEP, FAAEM, FESC, FAHA, FCPP, is to advance the scientific basis, collaborative research efforts, and educational opportunities associated with the clinical use of cannabis-derived therapies, while also influencing social innovation and patient experience. Academic and scientific leadership will be provided by a multidisciplinary Steering Committee comprised of leading national and international experts in the field of medical cannabis.
“The ratio of hype and advocacy to scientific knowledge in the field of medical marijuana is far too high. Patients and their caregivers want new approaches to illness management and pain relief but their exposure to under-tested and un-validated treatments should be limited and carefully managed and monitored while a stronger evidence base is developed,” said Dr. Pollack. “In addition to serving a robust educational mission, the Steering Committee of the CMCER will for the first time promulgate a comprehensive research agenda for medical cannabis, identifying what we need to learn and how we should learn it. Jefferson is taking an extraordinary leadership position in this challenging and controversial area of healthcare.”

Education will indeed have a significant emphasis in the Center’s agenda. In the form of online courses for physicians and pharmacists, CMCER will offer accredited professional education about the potential clinical uses of medical cannabis that is required of medical professionals before recommending cannabis to patients. Furthermore, science-informed content will target specific stakeholder groups such as law enforcement, nurses, case managers, dispensary personnel, and the public, and will address common misconceptions and support appropriate expectation management regarding the clinical use of cannabis.

The research focus of the Center will entail collaboration with other research institutions, both domestic and international, and a prioritized research agenda established by the Steering Committee that will serve as a guide to researchers and funders. Using a web-based platform, a longitudinal registry will be developed to capture both physician-entered and patient-entered data on the indication, use, efficacy, and adverse effects of medical cannabis. There will also be eventual opportunity for grant funding through the Center as approved by the Steering Committee.

Donald Abrams, M.D., Chief of Hematology-Oncology at Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital, and a member of the CMCER Steering Committee, commented on the new center by saying, “Jefferson’s Center will fill the gap and provide much needed comprehensive institutional leadership in medical cannabis education and clinical research. I am pleased to be part of the effort.”

Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf signed the Medical Marijuana Act into law on April 17th, making Pennsylvania the 24th state in the U.S. to legalize medical marijuana. This legislation establishes a program for use of medical marijuana by patients with a “serious medical condition,” defined as conditions such as cancer, Crohn’s disease, Parkinson’s disease, epilepsy, and glaucoma, among others.
CMCER is the latest program to be launched from the Institute of Emerging Health Professions (IEHP) at Jefferson. IEHP is an educational venture that combines and harnesses the intellect and experience of a talented group of healthcare providers, educators, and administrators, along with leaders from outside the healthcare industry, to envision and then provide education that prepares the workforce for healthcare and related demands of the future. The mission of the Institute is to identify, develop, and rapidly deploy training curricula at the certificate or master’s level for career paths and job options that often do not exist today, but will become imperative as healthcare evolves.

For more information on CMCER, please visit www.Jefferson.edu/IEHP/CannabisResearch.

###

About Jefferson

Jefferson encompasses Thomas Jefferson University and Jefferson Health, representing our academic and clinical entities. Together, the people of Jefferson, 19,000 strong, provide the highest-quality, compassionate clinical care for patients, educate the health professionals of tomorrow, and discover new treatments and therapies that will define the future of health care.

Jefferson Health comprises five hospitals, 17 outpatient and urgent care locations, as well as physician practices and everywhere we deliver care throughout the city and suburbs across Philadelphia, Montgomery and Bucks Counties in Pa., and Camden County in New Jersey. Together, these facilities serve nearly 73,000 inpatients, 239,000 emergency patients and 1.7 million outpatient visits annually. Thomas Jefferson University Hospital is the largest freestanding academic medical center in Philadelphia. Abington Hospital is the largest community teaching hospital in Montgomery or Bucks counties. Other hospitals include Jefferson Hospital for Neuroscience in Center City Philadelphia; Methodist Hospital in South Philadelphia; and Abington-Lansdale Hospital in Hatfield Township.

Thomas Jefferson University enrolls more than 3,800 future physicians, scientists, nurses and healthcare professionals in the Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), Jefferson Colleges of Biomedical Sciences, Health Professions, Nursing, Pharmacy, Population Health and is home of the National Cancer Institute (NCI)-designated Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center.

For more information and a complete listing of Jefferson services and locations, visit www.jefferson.edu.