

AJEM Welcomes Uma Dhanabalan, MD, MPH, FAAFP

Uma Dhanabalan, MD, MPH, FAAFP, has been appointed Medical Director and Editor of a new *AJEM* column entitled Patients, Providers, and Possibilities. The new column will feature clinical insights based on Dr. Uma's medical cannabis practice, Uplifting Health & Wellness, located in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Like many medical providers, Dr. Uma did not start out with the intention of becoming a medical cannabis practitioner. After obtaining her medical degree from the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey in Newark, and completing a residency in Family Medicine at the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston, she went on to complete her Master's in Public Health at Harvard's TH Chan School of Public Health.

After studying the association between toxic chemicals and illness, Dr. Uma, as she is fondly called by her patients and colleagues alike, became interested



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in occupational and preventive medicine and went on to complete a fellowship in Occupational Medicine at Harvard's School of Public Health. It wasn't until her mother passed from lung disease in 2012 despite never smoking nor working in a job with increased risk for occupational disease, that Dr. Uma became actively involved in advocating for cannabinoid medicine.

Now Dr. Uma can often be found speaking in front of lawmakers in Massachusetts and Washington, DC uttering phrases like "Cannabis is not for everyone, yet it should be a first-line option not the last resort" or "Cannabis is entrance to a better quality of life; it is an exit drug from pharmaceuticals, narcotics, alcohol, and nicotine." Her mission is to change the stigma surrounding cannabis and to help educate others about the endocannabinoid system.

We welcome Dr. Uma to the *AJEM* family and look forward to her new column.