

How a Woman Run Biotech Company Is Shaping Cannabis Science

Woman Led Biotech Firm Advances First CBD Based Treatment for Endometriosis

Millions of Women Turn to Cannabis for Relief Amid Poor Treatment Options

Millions of women worldwide are living with endometriosis an incurable, chronically painful condition with limited treatment options and shockingly little medical research. Many have turned to cannabis products for relief, often without guidance, standardized dosages, or tested formulations.

For Melissa Sturgess, CEO of London-based biotech firm Ananda Pharma, this crisis represents both a scientific gap and a critical opportunity.

Her company aims to change that by developing what could become the first regulator-approved CBD-based medicine for endometriosis, bringing pharmaceutical rigor to an area long neglected by mainstream healthcare.

It's a mission Sturgess will spotlight at MJBizCon in Las Vegas, where she joins other women leading data-driven, health-focused cannabis companies pushing for evidence-based solutions.

Endometriosis: A Painful, Under Researched Condition Driving Women Toward Cannabis

Endometriosis affects 10% of reproductive-age women, according to the World Health Organization. It causes debilitating pain, infertility, and long-term inflammation yet receives just 0.038% of NIH research funding.

With mainstream treatments limited to hormonal therapy, painkillers, and surgery, many women have turned to CBD and cannabis products.

But most options lack clinical validation.

The only pharmaceutical-grade CBD currently approved is Epidiolex, indicated solely for severe epilepsy. Meanwhile, women seeking relief often rely on unregulated products available at gas stations, convenience stores, or state dispensaries with inconsistent testing standards.

Why Doctors Turned to a Biotech Firm for Answers

Cannabis' federal illegality has made research difficult in the U.S., pushing many medical professionals to seek solutions abroad.

Sturgess says specialists approached Ananda Pharma directly.

That demand pushed Sturgess to commit to rigorous, regulator-approved science, the only pathway to widespread access.

Ananda Pharma Pursues a Formal Regulatory Pathway for Cannabis Medicine

Working in the U.K. offers a unique advantage: the National Health Service (NHS) can reimburse cannabis-based medicines *if* supported by randomized, controlled trials.

Endometriosis is not currently an approved indication, because no such trial-backed medicine exists.

Ananda intends to change that.

Their lead formulation, MRX-1, is advancing through early-stage clinical development.

- Initial healthy volunteer studies have been completed under hospital supervision.
- A larger patient trial is planned for 2026.
- The end goal: a prescription, reimbursable cannabinoid medicine specifically for endometriosis pain.

If successful, MRX-1 could become the first women's health focused cannabinoid pharmaceutical: a milestone for both cannabis medicine and women's healthcare.

Why Investors Are Paying Attention: Epidiolex Proved the Model Works

The success of Epidiolex demonstrated that naturally derived cannabinoids can meet the highest regulatory standard and deliver strong returns.

Sturgess believes the same model evidence-based development, standardized dosing, and controlled trials is the future.

Biotech Principles Are Beginning to Shape Cannabis Especially at MJBizCon

The shift toward verifiable science is already evident across the industry.

Earlier this year, Sturgess attended a women-in-wellness event where she repeatedly heard the same sentiment:

“Finally, someone is doing the work.”

At MJBizCon's science symposium on Tuesday, Dec. 2, Sturgess and three other women CEOs will discuss how cannabis companies can compete in a market where:

- margins are tightening
- investors demand measurable proof
- regulators expect pharmaceutical-grade compliance
- consumers increasingly prefer validated products

Her advice to operators navigating this new landscape?

A Data Driven Future for Cannabis Medicine

As cannabis businesses face growing scrutiny over product claims, potency accuracy, and safety, Sturgess's approach is becoming a blueprint for the next generation of cannabinoid therapeutics.

If Ananda Pharma's MRX-1 succeeds in trials, it could shift the global conversation about cannabis for women's health from anecdotal relief to measurable, regulated treatment.

And for millions of women living with endometriosis, that shift can't come soon enough.

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