

With the rise of private medical cannabis clinics in the UK since the 2018 regulatory changes, patients increasingly seek treatment options beyond the NHS. Yet the private market can be tricky to navigate, especially when it comes to costs. Some clinics make it hard to understand what you really pay — beyond the headline consultation fee.

This guide helps you spot pricing tricks used by private medical cannabis clinics. We'll cover key areas like regulation, oversight, legal prescribers, unlicensed medicines, and how to protect yourself from hidden fees and confusing cost structures.

Understanding the Regulatory Landscape

Private medical cannabis clinics operate within a strict regulatory framework, but enforcement varies. Knowing who oversees these clinics and how the rules work gives you a baseline for spotting red flags.

Care Quality Commission (CQC) – The Clinic Overseer

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is the independent regulator of health and social care services in England. Any private clinic offering medical cannabis or any medical treatment must be registered with the CQC. You can check a clinic's registration number on the CQC website.

Why this matters for pricing:



- Registered clinics must provide clear information about costs and services.
- CQC inspects clinics for safety and compliance, including the accuracy and transparency of information.
- They can take action against clinics with misleading pricing or poor disclosures.

If a clinic is unregistered or avoids sharing its CQC registration number, that's a significant warning sign.

General Medical Council (GMC) and the Specialist Register

Doctors prescribing medical cannabis must be registered with the GMC and appropriately qualified. The Specialist Register shows doctors with specialist recognition.

Why is this relevant for pricing?

- Clinics advertising “specialist doctors” should name them and confirm their GMC registration numbers.
- The doctor’s specialty informs their scope and competence—for example, neurology, pain management, or psychiatry.
- Unqualified or generalist doctors may be less experienced in prescribing cannabis medicines, increasing risk and possibly leading to more follow-up visits or extra costs.

Spotting Pricing Tricks in Medical Cannabis Clinics

Now let’s dive into the common pricing issues that patients face. These can complicate your ability to compare clinics or fully understand what you will pay.

The Headline Consultation Fee: Not the Full Story

Almost every clinic advertises a consultation fee prominently — for example, “£150 for your first appointment.” But clinics often use this as bait, with further charges hidden in the small print or only disclosed later.

Typical hidden costs include:

- **Dispensing fees:** Charges for preparing and supplying cannabis medicines can add £50–£100 or more per prescription.
- **Repeat prescription fees:** Monthly or quarterly charges for follow-up visits or phone consultations.
- **Insurance fees:** Some clinics bundle in risk insurance but do not clearly state this cost.
- **Subscription bundles:** Clinics may offer a “package” that locks you into recurring payments which are hard to cancel.

Tip: Always ask clinics to provide a full, written breakdown of all fees before booking.

Extra Charges and Services That Lead to Surprise Bills

Beyond consultation and dispensing fees, watch out for extras related to:

- Lab tests or additional diagnostic services that may be recommended but not included in the initial price.
- Specialist reports or letters for your GP or insurance company, which can carry administration fees.
- “Medicinal cannabis passports” or patient cards, which some clinics sell for a fee but have no official status.

Spot the trick: If a clinic obliges you to pay extra for basic services, ask for pricing details upfront and compare with at least two other providers.

Comparison Barriers That Obscure True Prices

Many clinics deliberately make it difficult to price-compare, through tactics like:

- Offering only vague or “starting from” prices without full details.
- Bundling consultation, dispensing, and medicine fees into one opaque monthly amount.
- Requiring you to contact the clinic directly for full pricing, often leading to sales pressure.
- Using non-standard terminology, like “membership plans” or “treatment programmes” instead of listing individual costs.

How to overcome this barrier:

1. Request a detailed, itemised quote in writing before any commitment.

2. Check if the clinic publishes a price list online or is transparent about fees.
3. Compare your quotes from different clinics on a like-for-like basis: consultation, prescribing, dispensing, repeat visits, and medicine costs.
4. Confirm the clinic's registration with CQC and the prescribing doctor's GMC number to ensure legitimacy.

Unlicensed Medicines and Risk Disclosure

Medical cannabis medicines in the UK are mostly *unlicensed* (not formally authorised by the MHRA). While legal to prescribe, this carries additional risks and different moroccoworldnews.com rules around safety information and costs.

Clinics must:



- Explain that the medicines are unlicensed and discuss risks openly.
- Give you clear instructions on use, side effects, and what to do if you have problems.
- Be upfront about costs since unlicensed medicines aren't routinely covered by insurance or the NHS.

If a clinic downplays these points or uses vague language about efficacy and safety, be cautious. Transparency about unlicensed medicines often correlates with clearer pricing and ethical practice.

Who Can Legally Prescribe Medical Cannabis in the UK?

Only medical doctors (not nurses or pharmacists) can prescribe medical cannabis privately in the UK. Importantly:

- They must be on the GMC register.
- They should have relevant clinical expertise (neurology, pain medicine, psychiatry).
- GPs rarely prescribe cannabis unless they have special training and experience.

Beware clinics advertising non-medical prescribers or "consultants" without a GMC number. These are red flags that the clinic may not be adhering to legal or professional standards, which could lead to hidden costs or poor care.

Checklist: How to Avoid Pricing Tricks When Choosing a Clinic

What to Check Why It Matters What to Do **CQC Registration Number** Ensures clinic meets regulatory standards Find and verify on the CQC website before booking **GMC Number for Prescribing Doctor** Confirms legal prescribing and specialist competence Ask for the doctor's name and GMC registration number and check online **Itemised Price List** Shows all fees including extra charges Request a written breakdown including dispensing fees and follow-ups **Transparency on Unlicensed Medicine Risks** Indicates ethical compliance and informed consent Read patient information leaflets and ask questions about risks **Clear Terms on Subscriptions or Bundles** Avoids hidden ongoing costs or lock-in contracts Read cancellation policies carefully and consider one-off treatments if unsure

Summary

Private medical cannabis clinics offer new treatment choices, but pricing can be complex and confusing. Don't be fooled by a low headline consultation fee alone. Ensure the clinic is regulated by the CQC and that prescribing doctors appear on the GMC Specialist Register. Always request itemised costs upfront, watch for hidden fees, and confirm you understand the risks of unlicensed medicines.

Being proactive in checking these details helps you avoid pricing tricks and choose a clinic that offers transparent, safe, and professional care.