



WHOLISTIC RELEAF™

A DIVISION OF  
WHOLISTIC PEDIATRICS & FAMILY CARE  
ESTABLISHED IN 2005

## Epilepsy, Autism and Medical Marijuana; A Florida Mom's Fight for Her Son's Life

**"We were at a loss on what to do to help stop Anthony's seizures," said Joann Shea, of Riverview, Florida.**

Anthony Shea has low-functioning autism, and at 28 years of age, is unable to speak. His daily meltdowns, anxiety, OCD, tics, and tremors, all common symptoms of autism, were manageable. Stressful, yet manageable.

Then Anthony began having grand mal (also known as tonic-clonic) seizures, which is the most severe type of seizure someone can have.

His first seizure was so severe that he dislocated his shoulder.

He was put on a variety of pharmaceuticals to try to stop the seizures, but they changed Anthony, for the worse.

"He became so aggressive," said Anthony's mom, Joann. "He would hit himself. He would hit us. He even hit at school and ended up getting kicked out. It was a horrible experience for us."

***"Anthony has had no negative reactions to medical marijuana," said Joann. "He is mellow and happy and seizure-free."***

Usually nonviolent, this change in behavior sent Anthony's parents searching for a solution. With the help of his neurologist, they tried changing his medication, but the aggressive behavior continued. Then they tried



lowering his medication and Anthony had four grand mal seizures in a month. One of these seizures caused Anthony to dislocate his shoulder again and injure his head when he fell back and hit it on the tile floor.

That's when his mom, Joann, a nurse practitioner, and Anthony's father, Chris, a scientist, began researching medical marijuana. Concerned with the number of medications he was taking, they wanted a more natural solution. They spoke with Anthony's neurologist who then referred them to Dr. David Berger of Wholistic ReLeaf.

"I first saw Anthony in July of 2017," said Dr. Berger. "His parents' goal was to reduce his seizures, behavioral meltdowns, and anxiety. They wanted him to have a better quality of life and be happy."

Anthony's epilepsy qualified him for medical marijuana under Florida

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About  
David Berger,  
MD, FAAP

Dr. David Berger ("Dr. David"), a Board Certified Pediatrician with over 20 years of experience as a clinician, has developed a national reputation in wholistic pediatric primary care. Dr. David is considered Tampa Bay area's leading authority on medical cannabis for adults and children and is one of the nation's most experienced pediatricians using medical cannabis to help facilitate the treatment of children with chronic conditions.

Dr. David graduated from The Medical College of Pennsylvania in 1994 and completed his pediatric residency at the University of South Florida/Tampa General Hospital where he first began utilizing wholistic therapies. Dr. David has been in private practice since 1997 and in 2005 opened Wholistic Pediatrics & Family Care, his medical practice in Tampa, Florida. In 2010, Dr. David was appointed Assistant Professor at the University of South Florida College of Nursing. In 2016, he launched Wholistic ReLeaf to help qualified patients become certified to use medical cannabis.

law. However, Dr. Berger advised his parents on the importance of having his clobazam (brand name: Onfi, an anti-seizure medication) blood levels checked once on, and again periodically while using, cannabidiol (CBD).

“Certain medications can have drug interactions with cannabis,” said Dr. Berger. “Clobazam can build up in the system when taking CBD (low-THC medical cannabis), and can bring increased side effects of the clobazam. The dose of this medication might need to be reduced while taking CBD.”

He was also advised that fluvoxamine (brand name: Luvox), which Anthony was taking to help with his overall mood and anxiety, can slow the body’s breakdown of cannabis. Therefore, less cannabis may be required to be beneficial. The dose of cannabis might also need to be increased if the dose of the fluvoxamine is lowered.

Once Anthony received his patient card from Florida’s Office of Medical Marijuana Use (and Joann a “caregiver” card), his mom began administering a low dose of oral CBD for one week. She then added a small amount of oral THC. Over the next few weeks, Joann gradually increased his doses of CBD and THC to levels that were most beneficial for Anthony. Soon afterward, his life improved for the better and she was able to decrease his seizure medication within a couple of weeks.

“Not only has Anthony completely stopped having seizures, but his behavior has also remarkably improved, including his obsessive-compulsive behaviors” said Joann. “He has maybe one meltdown a week, and it is mild. He is sleeping better too. In the past, he was up all night.”

Another test came this summer when Anthony had to undergo surgery on his shoulder. Usually a stressful time

for any individual, Anthony recovered with ease.

“He did so well after the surgery,” said Joann. “Because of the medical marijuana, he was calm and handled the pain well and was able to quickly get off the pain medication the surgeon prescribed.”

Anthony is still taking a low dose of clobazam (5 mg) and fluvoxamine. His parents and doctors are considering weaning him from the Luvox since Anthony’s behavior and mood is significantly improved. His parents are convinced that medical marijuana has not only helped eliminate Anthony’s seizures, they feel it has improved his autism symptoms.

Over fourteen months have passed, and Anthony is still doing well.

“Anthony has had no negative reactions to medical marijuana,” said Joann. “He is mellow and happy and seizure-free.”

Sidenote: Certain medications can affect how cannabis is metabolized in the body and vice versa. Therefore, it is imperative that patients are educated on safe dosages to minimize



the risk of adverse side effects. Dr. David Berger is an expert at medical marijuana dosing and interactions. He checks every patient for interactions of medical cannabis to all prescriptions that they take as part of the certification appointment.

**For more information about the transformative effects of medical cannabis, visit Wholistic ReLeaf at [WholisticReLeaf.com](http://WholisticReLeaf.com).**



## About Wholistic ReLeaf

Wholistic ReLeaf, founded in 2016 by Dr. David Berger of Wholistic Pediatric and Family Care, empowers families and patients to choose the best treatment approach available for their medical condition. The mission of Wholistic ReLeaf is to evaluate and certify qualified patients who meet the State of Florida legal requirements for receiving medical cannabis and provide medical cannabis management and dosing consultations to patients certified by other Florida physicians. Wholistic ReLeaf is committed to providing patients with the best possible care, while also complying with the ever-shifting legal landscape of medical cannabis in the State of Florida.

**For more information, or to find out if you or someone you know may be eligible to use medical cannabis as part of a customized treatment plan, visit [www.WholisticReLeaf.com](http://www.WholisticReLeaf.com).**