



PHOTO COURTESY ADAM JACQUES

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with smaller attacks, to one seizure every four to six weeks, Young says, and all of the smaller ones are now gone.

"She's also trying to stand on her own," Young goes on, "and rolling over with purpose. She's making new sounds. She is incredibly engaged in everything, whereas before she spent an awful lot of time in her own world. She smiles. She giggles. Her cognitive abilities are improving every day."

What's more, the Youngs have decreased Leni's anti-epileptics by 20 percent, with no increase in oil dosage, no notable side effects and, most importantly, no increase in seizures. "Adam gave me my child back," she says. "We have this happy little girl. Her quality of life is pretty wonderful."

CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM

When it's suggested that Leni's turnaround is nothing short of a miracle, Young grows adamant. "Don't say that word!" she blurts with a laugh. This makes sense. To paint Leni's transformation in loaves-and-fishes terms does a subtle disservice to the ongoing evidence of the benefits of medical cannabis, which remains a massively uncharted region of healing. It puts the freeze on the seriousness of the situation. What's more, proclaiming miracles offers psychic ammo to detractors, couching any medical advances in hippy-dippy mysticism and making them, therefore, easier to dismiss.

Jacques cautions that cannabis, no matter how miraculous-seeming the results, is not a cure. "It's another medication to improve somebody's quality of life," he says. "And it seems to do that in spades, especially with these kids. And it's fantastic." As one of the international leaders in the CBD-strong cannabis movement, Jacques finds himself part of a vague vanguard of holistic healers — part doctor, part cultivator and part spokesman for an ancient-new medicine that is still fitfully breaking into the mainstream.

In the latter regard, Jacques remains cautiously optimistic and skeptically realistic about the recent advances in medical cannabis, noting that much remains to be done in terms of legislation, scientific research and

cooperation with the established medical community. He says, for instance, that he is nervous about the advance into the industry of pharmaceutical giants like GW Pharma, which is researching the means of breaking cannabis down into its constituent parts for synthesis.

"They are not using the full cannabis plant extracts and are pushing CBD-only solutions," he says of pharmaceutical companies seeking to streamline and monopolize cannabis extracts. "By fractioning off cannabinoids and rebuilding them into what they want, they can finally patent a plant and hold patients hostage as to what they can legally use and what their insurance will cover. It does not work anywhere near as well as actual raw cannabis extractions, but the money and influence they have are attempting to make it the only choice."

Jacques says he's particularly wary of current pressure on the Oregon State Legislature to fold the medical cannabis market into the recreational market, effectively doing away with medical cannabis providers. Should the medical cannabis program go away, Jacques notes, his capacity to work with kids like Leni would be abolished, reducing him to a seller who cannot make a recommendation on treatment for fear of legal repercussions. "The fact is, people can't go into rec stores and ask for advice," he says.

"Without us sticking up for ourselves, we're going to get crushed," Jacques says of medical cannabis providers. "That's what's already happening in other states," he adds, explaining that should the medical marijuana program be done away with, Big Pharma could step in "and take our genetics, take the work we've been doing and get us out of the industry. They want us to be recreational."

Jacques, who is now up for the worldwide Most Influential Person in the Industry award at the CannAwards International conference Feb. 16 in Puerto Rico, says he considers any recognition he receives as a mere means to an end: promoting and furthering public understanding of the medical benefits of cannabis in the lives of folks like Frank Leeds and Leni Young.

"It's kind of at the go-big or go-home point," he says of the fight against Big Pharma and other forces seeking to co-opt the medical cannabis program. "Everything's

a means to an end, and that end is helping people. I can win all the awards I want, but it doesn't seem to matter to those people. I'll never stop. I'm going to keep doing what's right."

THE ROAD AHEAD

Leni's mom Amy Young is equally vocal about the need to preserve and expand upon the current medical cannabis program. "From here, everybody deserves the opportunity to have their doctor dictate their treatment instead of their zip code," she says, adding that her family had to move 2,700 miles to avoid legal repercussions for treating Leni with cannabis.

As of now, Jacques says he believes he has the largest library of CBD-dominant strains in the world, including the highest CBD percentage yet tested, and he continues to "dial in" more effective oil combinations for patients like Leni as well as breeding new strains all the time. "I still have huge breeding projects going on right now," he says. "Nobody's going as hard at it as I am."

Jacques says he hasn't decided whether he'll travel to Puerto Rico next month for the CannAwards, which doesn't mean he shies from embracing his celebrity as a CBD big dog. At the August conference in Seattle, he rolled up in overalls amid the suit-and-tie set to accept his industry award, looking to "take it back to Eugene, Oregon, where it really belongs," he says. "I feel that we've got the best cannabis and the best growers in the world."

Along these lines, Jacques says he looks forward to gearing up for the advent of Oregon's recreational marijuana program. He has plans for a new greenhouse on his property, and his grow rooms are currently cycling through fragrant crops of frosty bud. "I want to be a name out there," Jacques says, smiling. "I'd love to be the Ninkasi of cannabis. I think that would be great," because, he adds, any income earned from rec could further support his medical cannabis pursuits.

"Every day the majority of my time is spent working on the patients," Jacques says. "I get paid by helping people. I'm not making any money. I'm not growing this stuff to grow money. Intention in the universe is everything." ■