



The Face of New Jersey Medical Marijuana



What is in a name? Well, a lot. A name identifies us, describes us, and whether we like it or not, a name often defines us. ~ Ralph Waldo Emerson may have said it best, “No orator can top the one who can give good nicknames”. But names come in many different forms and origins. Your first name came from your parents and was a result of the time period and culture in which you were born. But your names that you acquire throughout your life come from many different sources. You might be goalie, best friend, a lifeguard, Prom King/Queen, Spouse, Manager, Parent, Senator and Grandparent. However, you may also acquire some names which you really wish you did not want: fatso, victim, inmate, divorcee, defendant and often the most difficult of all “patient”. Once you get that title (xyz illness patient), everything else seems to change. It’s as if your life up to that point is permanently altered by this new title. Everything about your health is going to be referred to the past tense. I WAS fine until...I WAS able to do that until... and My friends used to invite me until... And often the most hurtful of all is the loss of your most precious title, your *name*. From now on you will be referred to as the guy with (XYZ) illness, the (XYZ) disease patient or spouse of the (XYZ) sufferer.

Hello, my name is Bradley Mann. I am co-founder and Executive Director of Compassion Associates.Org. But before I held my current title, I held several others. My career as an Accountant was stopped in its prime at the age of 35. I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis,



but the strange symptoms that had started several years prior had reached critical mass and left me unable to perform the responsibilities of my job. I had to leave my title of Manager of a major Fortune 500 corporation to my title as a *MS Patient, disabled, SSDI recipient, handicapped*, or any other varied iterations.

However, I felt that those titles were inaccurate and limiting of me as a person. Very quickly people began to see me as only a MS sufferer. All conversations began to revolve around my illness. I pleasantly answered their inquiries because they asked out of kindness and concern. But inside, I was screaming. My world was shrinking down to the goings on of some very private and scary bodily changes. I was soon wondering, what happened to all my other titles? For, before my illness (here comes that past tense again!!), I was a Son, Brother, Fisherman, Student, Husband, Dad, Hiker, Photographer and Baseball Fan. Although my ability to partake in some of my previous passions was diminished, my feelings for those activities and persons remained unchanged. In fact, I actually longed for them more now than ever before. Yet, MS sufferer/patient was how people were seeing me.

As time marched on, some other illness began to rear the ugly heads. During the next several years, I was poked, prodded, scanned, scoped, x-rayed, examined, and otherwise made to feel more like a lab rat than a young adult who was supposedly in the prime of his life. Multiple Sclerosis, as well as most illness, is exacerbated by stress. The stress incurred from these procedures, in addition to the uncertainty as to what else may be wrong, was the perfect fuel to keep stoking the MS flames in attacking my body. You may say it was the medical *Perfect Storm* and I was slowly drowning. My daily goal was just to keep the ship afloat.

Over the course of the next few years, I would become to be formally diagnosed with a host of other incurable and potentially life altering illness. Some of the biggies were Narcolepsy (and related Cataplexy), Restless Leg Syndrome (RLS), Esophageal Ulcers, Obstructive Sleep Apnea, Psoriasis, Migraine Headaches, Chronic GERD (Severe Persistent Heartburn), Period Limb



Movement Disorder (PLMD) and Degenerative Disc Disease of the Neck and Spine. The impacts from some of these conditions were lessened with use of very potent medications and medical devices, while others needed invasive surgery to make daily living manageable. The good news that none of these illnesses were life threatening and that my “title” changed as I was no longer JUST an MS sufferer. The bad news was that I graduated to “*all around chronic illness*” patient. But I was still a patient and not a person to so many people.

As a co-founder of Compassion Associates, I knew from the beginning that our goal was to help people. It sounds so simple, but yet often gets missed in today's frantic paced world. There are millions people suffering from painful or debilitating conditions. And this happens every single day. The majority of them are suffering in silence. They don't get to choose when to tell their crippling pain to take some time off so they can attend their child's' little league game. They don't get a chance to pick when their nausea should take a break so they can enjoy Thanksgiving dinner with their loved ones. And they don't get to ask their doctor what medication to prescribe to help live their life! Well, I know that each one of us has the ability to make the difference in just one person's life today. Now imagine the power for good if each one of us joins to together in improving the lives of others! That's why I'm so excited about being part of Compassion Associates, where *People helping People feel better* happens every day. We believe so strongly about that statement that we've chosen it to be our slogan as well as mission statement. Because, at the end of the, isn't life truly about *People helping People feel better*? We believe so and help you will too. Thank you and God Bless.

--Bradley Mann

Co-Founder and Director,

CompassionAssociates.org



Compassion Associates is a New Jersey-based, not-for-profit organization which was founded by individuals who are concerned for patients in New Jersey who will benefit from the legal, medicinal use of marijuana. The organization's founders include Bradley Mann, a long-time New Jersey resident who himself suffers from Multiple Sclerosis. The organization was formed to help ensure that – where medical marijuana is deemed legal (including New Jersey) – no person who could benefit from the medicinal use of marijuana is left out, so that no person needlessly suffers; thus, our Group's slogan: **"People Helping People Feel Better"**. . . .For more information, visit <http://www.CompassionAssociates.org>