

SB 155
Derek John Espinoza

Greetings to everyone and thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak in front of you today.

My name is Derek Espinoza and I am a medically retired seven year veteran of the Wichita police department. I joined in 1999 and my career was ended in 2006.

On October, 18th 2003 I responded to a call at a bar in North Wichita. While there I was assaulted by several men. When it was all over myself and one other officer were hospitalized. The injuries my partner sustained were severe trauma to the neck. From that night forward I encountered life changing illnesses.

I was sent home from the hospital the morning of October 18th. I remembered having a terrible headache and nausea as well. It wasn't long till I was noticing I was missing certain parts of the day.

I contacted my City of Wichita doctor and requested to see him. I told him I was having severe migraines, loss of time, feeling like I was blacking out and very tired. From that appointment I was given OxyContin. This type of treatment went on for 9 more months till I was seen by a different doctor for a consultation. At this point that doctor told me to come off the narcotics and I was sent to a neurologist.

After seeing this doctor, he provided several sleep studies, seizure studies and nerve conduction tests. My new diagnosis was TBI, Epilepsy, Post Concussion Migraine, Sleep Apnea, Neuropathy, and Insomnia.

The medications I was placed on were Depakote, Cymbalta, Gabapentin, Topamax, Provigil, Xylem, Rozerum, Lunesta, Tizanidine, Cyclobenzaprine, and Xanax. I was also given a breathing machine for my sleep apnea. While on all this medication I had a surgical procedure for Compartment syndrome. So add prescriptions narcotics onto this as well.

Shortly after being on these list of medications I was placed in the hospital and told my liver, kidneys, pancreas were all shutting down, I had an heart infection, and fluid on my heart. A heart surgeon came in my room and asked me if I wanted to live or die. He advised me to get a second opinion on my Neurologist, and told me to get off of as many medications as possible. Against my doctors orders I stopped most of my epilepsy drugs.

I did not stop them fast enough as I had gained 75lbs. I went from 222 to 297 pounds. All side effects from the epilepsy medicine. There were no alternative drugs and I was told the reason for such mass amount was because I was having between 17 and 25 seizures in a 24 hr period.

The injuries didn't stop there as I had my third back surgery on 01/15/15. After the back surgery I was put on 8mg of dilaudid a day and 100 mg of Percocet as well. I was on this high of pain medication for around 11 months. Again my liver started showing signs of wear.

This summer I was diagnosed with two new ailments. Fibromyalgia, and a blood clotting disorder. It was only after going to a rheumatoid doctor we found I had Cardiolipin antibody, which explains why I have been on blood thinners for around three years and will remain on them for life due to my history of pulmonary embolus. The Fibromyalgia was at first treated with pain meds and then I made the decision to look for a different pain relief. My body can no longer handle prescription pain killers (narcotics) and I cannot take the Tylenol because of my liver, and Advil because it can't be taken with blood thinners.

The reason for giving my story and all the medications I have been on through the years is simple. I wanted to show how medical marijuana, if used as an alternative drug might have stopped all the damage my body has taken from prescription drugs... some peoples bodies do not tolerate them very well at all. Those of us who have researched it know that THC, Medical Marijuana, has been shown to help with epilepsy, pain management, anxiety, and as well as migraines.

I want to first say, this was the hardest decision I ever had to make. I have now played with the medical side of marijuana and have found out something interesting.