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Pain management, medical marijuana clinic to open in TC

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TRAVERSE CITY – Daniel Reid’s life changed more than a decade after he was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, a neurological disease that can lead to vision problems, pain and paralysis.

An MS researcher told Reid about using Cannabidiol, a compound in marijuana, to treat the disease.

“Within a few days it had an enormous effect on me,” Reid said. “Over time I weaned myself off of other medications I was using, and now that’s how I am treating my MS. I’ve had it since 1997, and I’m perfectly healthy. It’s not progressing.”

The experience sparked Reid’s career in medical marijuana and pain management. He is opening a clinic in downtown Traverse City, Liberate420, for patients who seek help for pain, chronic disease or medical conditions, or who want to reduce their use of narcotics. He plans to open the clinic on Aug. 31, then open it periodically based on appointments.

Michigan allows residents who suffer from diseases such as cancer and Alzheimer’s or conditions such as nausea or seizures to receive a certification to use medical marijuana.

Reid’s no novice in the medical marijuana field. He opened the first clinic in Illinois, lobbies for medical marijuana laws and is opening clinics in 10 Michigan cities, including Traverse City, and expects to open more in Florida and Illinois.

Marla Gendleman will be the physician at all of Reid’s clinics, though she expects to hire more physicians if demand increases. She’s a Michigan native and anesthesiologist who will help patients get off prescription narcotics and avoid pain.

General anesthesia lost its appeal for Gendleman. She believes she's more connected to her pain management patients, and prefers a job in which she makes a bigger difference in patients' lives.

“These people are desperate,” Gendleman said. “(Medical marijuana) amazed me as a physician. The problem is there's not very much research being done on it because there's been no availability to get the drugs because it's a schedule one narcotic.”

Liberate420 won't sell marijuana – just give patients a place to meet with a physician. Insurance reimbursement forms are provided at appointments.

Reid considers marijuana a medicine and doesn't want to see it legalized for recreation.

“For people that are suffering with pain there are better alternatives than traditional narcotic medication,” Reid said. “That's really, at the end of the day, the most important. To have someone of our caliber practicing in Traverse City is a godsend to the community.”