



Interview: Dr. Bryan Doner, CEO Medical Director and Co-Founder of Compassionate Certification Centers

DCN: Can you tell us a little about yourself, your career, and your interest/current research with medical marijuana?

Dr. Bryan Doner: I am the CEO Medical Director and Co-Founder of Compassionate Certification Centers™, a medical marijuana marketing and consulting company based in Pittsburgh. I received my undergraduate education at Denison University and completed a graduate program in Medical Sciences at the University of Massachusetts at Boston. I then returned to Pennsylvania, where I was raised, to complete my medical education at the Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine, and then my residency training in Emergency Medicine at Saint Vincent Health System in Erie. I have also completed fellowship training in Wound Care and Hyperbaric Medicine. In addition to practicing clinically, I am also heavily involved in clinical research.

I serve as a member of the American Academy of Cannabinoid Medicine, American's for Safe Access, and the Society of Cannabis Clinicians. I currently practice clinically in multiple states, and have active medical licenses in Pennsylvania, Ohio and New York. I am also certified to attest for medical marijuana in New York, and will soon be able to in Pennsylvania and Ohio. Since the industry's inception, I have attended numerous symposiums and educational events regarding medical marijuana and research, oftentimes serving as a speaker or panel member. As an advocate for Medical Marijuana and as a clinical researcher, I am especially interested in future research within industry.

Myself, CCC and some partner organizations are also currently developing a research paradigm to look at medical cannabis as a possible treatment plan in Concussion and CTE, which was spawned out of my and my partner's participation in running the Concussion Clinic at our hospital. Research on animal models has shown potential neuro-protective and neuro-regenerative properties of CBD. Our current treatment options in concussion are moderate at best. Medical cannabis could potentially offer a treatment option that not only can help alleviate and shorten the course of symptoms, but also possibly prevent long term neurological sequelae. This is the ideal type of treatment option that is needed in concussion, and medical cannabis offers an opportunity to study and pursue this potential.

DCN: What is your goal for the World Medical Marijuana Business Conference & Expo?

Dr. Bryan Doner: Those of us who are physicians and providers have an obligation to understand the treatment options that are available today. Whether we believe in medical marijuana or not, as providers it is our duty to educate ourselves on the current research and have a basic understanding of the endocannabinoid system, because in the end, what we do is ultimately for our patients.

Our goal with the World Medical Marijuana Business Conference & Expo, was to create a physician-led educational event for both providers, patients and industry leaders. The

conference aims to establish a more inclusive and progressive healthcare dialogue by integrating medical marijuana resources, science and education into mainstream medicine. Healthcare providers that attend will have the opportunity to earn 22.5 AMA PRA Category 1 Continued Medical Education (CME) credits.

DCN: What is Compassionate Certification Centers and why does it matter?

Dr. Bryan Doner: Compassionate Certification Centers (CCC) was created to provide physicians and health care providers with the tools and resources they needed to safely and efficiently incorporate medical cannabis into their practice. We also provide a platform for patients to provide support, education and advocacy. Our organization was started as we felt these areas, particularly on the provider standpoint, were significantly lacking in the medical cannabis industry.

When I first became involved with the medical marijuana industry, I quickly discovered that there was a surprising lack of resources available to healthcare providers. This was a major turning point for me and for the establishment of CCC. As providers, we are critical to the evolution and success of this industry. Medical Marijuana is applicable to anyone who is involved in patient care. As a physician and advocate, I wanted to provide an educational platform and resources for not only patients, but all healthcare professionals.

Now that 28 states have passed legalization measures, it is imperative that all physicians and providers have a baseline understanding of medical marijuana science, as well as state-by-state rules and regulations. CCC is dedicated to providing the scientific and medical community with the ongoing support and tools to make integration efficient and safe.

DCN: In your opinion, what is the primary concern for health care providers regarding the cannabis industry? (Or, what are the largest hurdles they currently face?)

Dr. Bryan Doner: By far the biggest concern for health care providers in the cannabis industry is education. Physicians and health care providers are provided minimal, if any, mandated education on medical marijuana laws and the body's endogenous endocannabinoid system. Yet, this is absolutely key to their involvement, understanding, and ultimately the integration of medical cannabis into our healthcare system.

DCN: Where do you see medical cannabis research going in 2017?

Dr. Bryan Doner: There are numerous research studies across the globe that have studied the Endocannabinoid system within the human body, and there is definitive science behind this potential. This includes not only laboratory and animal models, but also human studies as well (particularly outside of the USA). For example, human studies have shown the benefits of medical cannabis as a treatment option or alternative for acute and chronic pain. Animal models have demonstrated the potential for cannabinoids to promote neuronal regeneration, which could potentially help prevent long term damage or promote increased recovery time in certain types of injuries.

One of the important steps in the evolution of medical cannabis research will be integrating and adopting cannabis material into medical schools and institutions of higher learning. We know for a fact the body has its own intrinsic endocannabinoid system. It will be a critical step for schools to integrate this into standard medical school education. The earlier that physicians and clinical providers learn about the endocannabinoid system and how it works, the greater the potential

for research and funding which will ultimately take medical cannabis to the next level.

DCN: In your opinion, at the moment what is the most exciting research happening with medicinal marijuana and why?

Dr. Bryan Doner: One of the areas that I have a particular interest is the potential of medical cannabis as a treatment option in concussion, post-concussion syndrome, and CTE. These disease processes are just starting to be understood at a much higher level, yet our treatment options at this time are marginal at best. However, medical cannabis could potentially offer a new alternative. We know from research in animal models that certain cannabinoids (i.e. CBD) can potentially be neuroprotective and neuroregenerative.

This means that potentially not only could medical cannabis help control the symptoms associated with concussion and post-concussion syndrome (headache, sleep disturbance, etc) but also possibly prevent or lessen long term neurological sequelae. This, in my opinion, is the ideal type of treatment option. One that not only reduces symptom severity and length, but that can also prevent long term damage.

DCN: What would you say is the biggest misconception about medical marijuana? (or please feel free to list multiple)

Dr. Bryan Doner: I think the biggest misconception is that its not “medical” at all. Marijuana has a stigma in our country that has manifested into an accepted reality over time. This stigma is primarily rooted in the “stoners mentality” stereotype. However, cannabis has been used medicinally, in some form or another, for over 1,000 years. The fact that it is associated more as a recreational drug than it is a medication or plant with therapeutic properties, is a misconception that only education can expose.

DCN: When did you start advocating for the use of medical marijuana and why? (e.g. was there a particular personal event?)

Dr. Bryan Doner: My advocacy for medical cannabis was built over time in more than one particular instance. I am heavily involved in clinical research, and this is where I first took notice. Once you take a look at the research available, it seemed reasonable to me that the endocannabinoid system could be viewed similarly to other biochemical models well known to human physiology. After that, I started to see and hear what I like to call “feel good stories.” Children with genetic disorders whose seizures were cut by 75% with medical cannabis, chronic pain patients who were able to stop their opiate pain medications and rely only on cannabis, etc. Stories such as these caught my attention, and from there, I did more research on my own, which is when I also started to better understand the sociopolitical challenges of medical cannabis. I actually believe this is a unique time in the history of our country with respect to incorporating medical cannabis into our healthcare system. I find this tremendously exciting and I cherish the opportunity for myself and our organization to play a significant role.

DCN: What opportunities are there for investors interested in the medical cannabis industry?

Dr. Bryan Doner: The opportunities for investors within the medical aspect of the cannabis industry are numerous and far reaching in my opinion. People ask me all the time what will happen to our organization if/when marijuana becomes legal everywhere recreationally. My answer to this is “nothing.” No matter what happens, I believe we know that cannabis absolutely

has medical utility. That is where and why this movement truly began, and was initiated by the patients. We have only scratched the surface of this utility and have so much to learn. With that said, the medical aspect of the cannabis industry will not be a “come and go” type situation. From developing new medications, to delivery systems, to product testing and standardization, to education, to software development, to name a few. The medical aspect of the cannabis industry provides numerous opportunities for investors and I believe these opportunities will expand as time moves forward.

DCN: What resources are available for doctors interested in expanding their practice to incorporate medical marijuana?

Dr. Bryan Doner: Though we have a long way to go, there are some resources available for providers interested in learning more about the benefits of medical marijuana, and even how to expand their practice to include medical marijuana. Organizations such as Compassionate Certification Centers, The Answer Page, and Americans for Safe Access, among others have dedicated programs to helping physicians and health care providers become educated and understand medical cannabis more thoroughly.

DCN: What resources are available to patients interested in medical marijuana treatments? From your perspective, what steps are necessary to integrate medical marijuana into mainstream medicine?

Dr. Bryan Doner: The ones above, particularly Americans for Safe Access (ASA) and Compassionate Certification Centers (CCC), provide patient information as well. State governments also provide patient education and information. There are numerous different options out there available, too many for me to comment on the validity and accuracy. Patients need to do due diligence to make sure their sources are reputable.

For the industry to actually succeed, both healthcare providers and cannabis industry leaders need to be open to establishing a more inclusive and progressive U.S. healthcare dialogue. In my opinion, this includes DEA consideration of removing “marihuana” from the Schedule I listing.

DCN: Anything else you’d like our readers to know?

Dr. Bryan Doner: We are aware, for a fact, that the body has an endogenous endocannabinoid system. We are aware that this system involves receptors to which ligands can bind and elicit a physiological effect. This, in essence, is very similar to many of the other systems and processes in the human body that we already modulate to our benefits.

Although we may not have all the answers yet, we do know that our bodies are intrinsically designed to respond to these molecules. Now, it is just a matter of us figuring out exactly how this intrinsic system works, and how we can use it to effectively treat certain disease processes and entities.

As time moves on, our understanding and knowledge will only increase. This ensures that medical marijuana will play a critical role in the long-term viability and expansion of the legal cannabis industry.